

**MY
POLICE COURT
FRIENDS
WITH THE COLOURS**

ROBERT HOLMES



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with the Colours

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BY

ROBERT HOLMES

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A POLICE COURT MISSIONARY AND PROBATION OFFICER

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INTRODUCTION.

My registers show that in these seventeen years last past I have visited sixteen thousand seven hundred and thirty-eight men and lads in their own homes, having followed them from the Police Court after prosecution for breaches of the law. The offences were mostly trivial, arising out of mischievous rather than criminal tendencies. Among the great bulk of the men it was idleness, drink, or gambling that caused their appearance before the Bench; with the lads, evil home influence, lack of discipline, above all, lack of worthy companions and friends, lay at the root of their misdoings. Thanks to a variety of means of help put into operation for their benefit by numerous persons, most of these were stayed in their evil course at its beginning.

A few, a very few, developed into criminals. I have continued to do what I could even for these, some of whom are now serving with the Colours. But the following sketches have nothing whatsoever to do with them. Another day it may be my privilege to deal with the problem of the confirmed criminal, be he monotonously sentenced to term after term of ordinary imprisonment or condemned to a long period of penal servitude. I am told that even some criminals are doing good service for Britain in the field at this present time,

and I can well believe it. But, I repeat, I am not concerned with such now.

I am dealing with one thousand two hundred and sixty-seven men and lads who, when the war broke out, were leading perfectly correct lives. After being in scrapes, all had recovered their feet. To a man they were gaining an honest livelihood by industrious labour. Many gave up good prospects when they answered the nation's call. All deserve to rank with the best. Their worst state was seldom from their own fault: the honourable condition the country's crisis found them in was largely of their own creating. And every one of them went to the fight thinking of no reward, but just of the safety and honour of Britain.

I place before their fellow-countrymen the brief biographies of seventy-two of these heroes. Pride and shame mingle as I write the short sketches of their lives—pride in their valour and in the calm dignity with which they went forth to do or die; and shame that lives like theirs should by our own selfishness and neglect of duty be often lived at home under conditions set out in some of the pages following.

As every one of these has recognised and discharged as best he could his duty to God and his neighbour, so may all of us be found ready, each in his own sphere and according to the ability given him, to set forth by our teaching and living certain old-fashioned truths which it seems to me are in danger of being forgotten. "The evil" shall then still "bow before the good, and the wicked at the gates of the righteous."

ROBERT HOLMES.

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MY POLICE COURT FRIENDS.



I.

ON MINE-SWEEPING TRAWLERS.

A TEACHER recently invited his pupils to write their impressions on "the gladdest surprise of the war." Their impressions turned out to be varied, which was natural. There was really no occasion for the disappointment that teacher showed because what he regarded as the gladdest surprise was passed over without comment by young minds more impressed by other happenings which they thought of supreme interest. It would indeed be difficult for a jury of mature years to agree upon a verdict deciding the relative merit of many of the unlooked-for blessings vouchsafed to Britain in her day of trial. The splendid loyalty universally exhibited by our dependencies great and small; the magnificent response of daughter states to the cry of the Motherland; the wonderful results at home of Lord Kitchener's appeal for men; the cessation of party strife throughout the Empire; the princely giving of British subjects all over the world to the various war relief funds: all these and many more great happenings have called forth our unstinted

admiration and praise; and many have singled out this or that as constituting the gladdest of all the glad surprises of the war.

It is not a little curious that those who knew best each peculiar set of circumstances, whether connected with colonial loyalty, home politics, or any of those factors which have worked to such glorious purpose in our Empire life, are those least astonished at what has transpired in scenes with which they are familiar, and most pleasantly startled by happenings in fields with which they are unacquainted.

What has come to me as a delightful experience, but certainly as something not at all startling, will quite possibly be regarded by some extravagant folk as the outstanding glad surprise of all. It is not *that*: still it is worthy of grateful record—the wonderful rebirth of the old spirit of Britain within many a breast where untoward circumstances of birth and upbringing might have crushed out the last spark of patriotism. That a fervent love of country should exist in the bosoms of those who have found little that we should call attractive or desirable in life; who seem to have nothing to thank anybody for until they came to be able to work out their own material salvation; who might have been excused had they hesitated to go into the fight, arguing that it mattered little whom they served, seeing that no country upon earth could have bestowed less benefit upon them than had been bestowed by their own—that is indeed a really notable, and will come to many as a surprising, blessing.

Throughout the memorable August of 1914 men and youths who had “been down,” and who, with a very little help, had recovered respectability or gained it for the first time, poured into my rooms daily to tell me that the cry, “Your King and Country need you,” had come home to them, until by the end of the month seven hundred and

fifteen had returned to the Colours, were training with the new army, or had gone to serve on mine-sweeping trawlers or supply boats, or as stokers on the great ships at sea. They had waited for no special pleading, no highly favourable terms of enlistment. It was enough for them that they were needed. That England was in danger, and that they could be of service in her hour of trial, filled them with a stern and proud determination to do their duty which brushed aside all other considerations as trifles light as air. News came later that, in the same month of August, lads who had been salved from our social wreckage and who were prospering in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, had heard the great call, and laid all else aside for sake of the homeland; and from the sea began to come stories of deeds of gallant devotion wrought by such-like lads to whom life aboard ship had offered a chance of betterment. The torrent of August fell from sheer exhaustion of numbers to a moderate stream during September, but that stream has flowed regularly ever since. Now, more than twelve hundred of my friends are serving. To me they form a glorious roll, for they represent very much more than half the entire number of eligible men and lads whom I have tried to help during these seventeen years.¹ And who are these patriots, and whence came they?

Here is a letter from a lad serving on a mine-sweeping trawler, written about the middle of January 1915. I quote it as written, altering only the spelling:—

“It is lonely, and I don’t know how we live through the cold. Oftener than not we’re wet through. I never seem to get used to the danger. I’m so frightened that I can’t often sleep proper. It goes off when you’re hard

¹ Seven thousand two hundred and five, otherwise eligible, being engaged in the manufacture of munitions of war.

at work; but when the excitement's over it's just as bad again. If it wasn't for thinking that poor folk's food depends on us keeping the sea clear, I'm sure I should run away first time I came into port again. I never prayed much before, but I say my prayers many a time a day now, and in the night as well; and I should be glad if you'd pray for me now and then."

No doubt a poor, ill-penned, mis-spelt scrawl enough, as little betokening a hero as one could well imagine; yet it was followed a fortnight later by a letter from the trawler's skipper telling how the boat had been blown in pieces and sunk by a mine. Then this passage occurs, concerning the writer of the poor letter just quoted:—

"George was the only one lost; and he gave up the bit of board that would have saved him so as to let a chap have it who was so badly hurt that he couldn't swim. Poor old George! He never made any shout about his pluck, and we most of us thought him a bit of a coward; but he showed us, after all, he was a game 'un, and no mistake."

Giving his life for another, so the hero died; died as he lived, since first I met him twelve years ago. His drunken father and his vicious step-mother had left his little brother and himself for two days in their wretched dwelling without food or fire. The kindness of neighbours had been so long abused by the unnatural parents as to tire them of helping the children, and on the evening of the second day George stole a piece of pork-pie to satisfy his brother's hunger, not partaking of a crumb himself. The brother's stomach, constitutionally delicate and weakened by long abstinence, rejected the gross food, and the little chap, beginning to shiver, excited George's profound alarm. Running up to me as I was visiting

their court, he told me his brother was dying. I went with him to see what I could do. A doctor who was fetched cheerily reassured the lad, but enquired what he was doing without anything on except shirt and trousers, seeing that the night was bitterly cold.

The doctor had noticed that his patient was wearing two coats and two waistcoats, and had guessed the truth. But George said nothing, so the sick lad was asked—

“Why do you wear two jackets, my boy?”

The answer came, feebly but promptly—

“Our George took his jacket and waistcoat off last night when I was cold, and made me put them on.”

That was my introduction to George. The doctor expressed his opinion of the parents, and thanked me for certain arrangements I was proposing to make for the lads' immediate well-being, then went to his numerous other duties. George remained looking anxiously upon his brother as though he feared matters were worse than the medical man would admit.

Suddenly he broke down completely, and confessed the cause of his brother's illness. I have witnessed not a few pathetic scenes in my time; I have stood in many pictures well worth painting; but I can recall few to match with this.

A squalid hovel, dimly lighted by a spluttering tallow candle and destitute of furniture save two chairs, without backs, an empty bacon box doing duty as a table, and a rickety wooden settle; a weakly, eight-year-old boy, pining for affection and care, lying on that rough couch in that cheerless room with a fireless grate; his brother, but a year his senior, with pinched, frail form, clad only in ragged trousers and a torn, sleeveless shirt, turning up to me a thin, white face, down which the hot tears streamed, as he sobbed out

in a trembling, anxious moan, "Will God kill him for eating the pork-pie because I stole it?"

I take it I need not say that the God whom I serve enabled me to quite satisfy my conscience-stricken questioner that he might put away his fears. In a little while the sick child was sleeping peacefully in his brother's arms in a comfortable bed readily and gladly provided by one of those humble saints of God not infrequently to be found among the very poor; women who came near to being angels, to whom the exceeding need of any little one is a passport to exceeding love.

The worthless parents returned the same night, and the next day the children again took up their dwelling in their lamentable home. A series of visits from an agent of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children was fruitful of temporary improvement; but after two years I met George again, this time in the Police Court.

It was the same story once more, with only slight variations. Left alone, without food or fire, on this occasion for three days and nights, the lads had suffered until the pangs of hunger grew intolerable; then George had pilfered bread and ch  ese from a grocer's shop. Both boys had partaken of the proceeds of the theft, but only George was prosecuted, and the officer in charge of the case informed me, "I don't think he'd have stolen for himself; his little brother had the biggest share." George was discharged with a caution, and, through my own efforts, the parents were brought before the Court a few days later, and were not discharged. They returned from prison, however, little changed. After two more years George offended again in a precisely similar manner and from the same desperate cause. On this occasion it was thought fit to give him a whipping, so as to impress upon him the fact

that stealing is never justifiable. He went from his whipping to an excellent master who had offered him employment through me. I should have much preferred to remove him altogether from home and environment, but his parents were unwilling, and he was not to be induced to leave his brother.

For three years more he remained in that melancholy dwelling, and no matter how his wages increased, no matter what presents of clothing his kind and generous master gave, he remained, with his brother, ill-fed and insufficiently clad, the improvidence and selfishness of the parents growing only more pronounced. But the hour of deliverance was at hand. The delicate lad was taken seriously ill, and removed to the hospital. For three weeks George haunted the gates, and rules were waived frequently to enable him to see his brother. It was pathetic, the nurses said, to witness his grief when at last the brother he so tenderly cared for died. The poor boy came to me when all was over, and said that he desired to go right away. He went to sea on a tramp steamer, visiting distant shores; twice he came back to this city, calling to see me before returning to his ship; on each occasion his tears were very near: he had been to look at a certain grave. The war came: he volunteered at once to serve on a mine-sweeping trawler; and the end found the hero still in the character I had ever known as his. It would come quite naturally to George to give up his life for another, as it had always come quite naturally to him to risk all for those he loved—and in these latter days for England—for us.

But what have we done to deserve that supreme sacrifice paid for us by George, and many more like him? Most of us have done nothing. We have given such-like a wide berth. They have simply not come into our thoughts or our lives at

all. Yet, neglected, friendless, tempted, tried, they were as other lads are. Their parched hearts thirsted for affection. George, for example, never forgot the goodness of the master who treated him as his willing and faithful service merited: no better. The kindness of the doctor who came on the night of the stealing of the pork-pie, "and never charged nothing," as the lad often told in amazement; and the tender care the nurses gave his dying brother, were ever fragrant memories with him. As for me, his ceaseless gratitude shamed me. For what had I done? A cheery word spoken when we met, two suits of clothing, grudgingly given, since it seemed wrong to relieve the parents of responsibility and yet was impossible to leave the lad in his rags; a bit of food from time to time, bestowed mostly *after* being reminded of the sore need by one of George's so-called crimes; help to get a situation in which he worked hard only to provide his father with means for extra excess, while his own lot remained equably miserable; the sea outfit procured cheerfully enough because his going to sea solved a difficult problem: that was all he had to thank me for. I could hardly have done less. Would that I had done more! All that he met with in the way of kindness on the part of any mortal he deserved a hundredfold. We were his debtors ere he laid down his life, in that we consented to suffer a state of society which rendered his early experience possible. How much more, then, do we owe now to him, and to others like him? It is not easy to take great gifts gracefully from those whom we have treated with indifference or treated badly. Yet what can we do in this our hour of need save accept with chastened joy their willing, priceless offering of life itself, and prove our contrition by determining that, God helping us, the elevation and betterment of the

class from which they sprang shall bear witness to the fact that they did not find us finally ungrateful—did not die in vain?

For who shall estimate the value of the service such lads have rendered? Look at this, written from "somewhere in the North Sea" by another of my mine-sweeper friends:—

"Our skipper says that but for us, poor folks in England would all be clammed (he means starved) to death; for the German mines would frighten all the ships away from the seaports after they'd sent a lot to the bottom. He read us a letter somebody had sent with some nice warm clothes and chocolate, and it said as how they were always praying for us and thinking about us. It made us all feel sad, like, for a bit; because it made us think how near we always are to Kingdom Come. We've had mines right between the trawl-board and the boat twice, and said our prayers thinking our end had come; but we've come out all right because of the prayers—more likely other folks' prayers than ours; for we're a rum lot. It isn't the danger so much as the dark nights and the loneliness that makes things so nasty. And it's awful cold and wet; and we've had eight months of it now, off and on. But we're all as cheerful as a lot of larks, and we're not coming back till the Germans are done for, and their mucky mines as well."

The writer was not to come back at all. That trawler was lost shortly after the letter was written; and the crew perished. How the end came, and how they bore themselves when the boat went down, we know not. We may picture out in fancy how Harry died from his letter just quoted, and his brief biography following. Possibly we may come near the truth.

He was ten years old when I first met him, brought before the magistrates for begging. His mother, a good-looking, plausible person, very neatly dressed, told a sad tale of her boy's unmanageableness and misdeeds. He was made to promise to give up begging, then allowed to go home. On visiting the home, I made the interesting discovery that the mother had hired her neat garments from a second-hand clothes shop so as to impress the bench with her appearance of respectability. She was in reality an idle, dirty, improvident person, whose house was filthy and verminous until the sanitary authorities intervened. The state of the house, in truth, mattered little to her, since she was seldom inside except to sleep. Her boy, fortunately an only child, returned from school day by day to find the door locked, and had to choose between going without food, or begging, or stealing. Harry never knew his father: he bore his mother's name. Divers men shared the home with the mother at different periods, and the lad from time to time bestowed the term "father" upon men whom he more frequently called "our Bill," or "our Jack," or "our Sam." Being a sharp boy, he soon abandoned begging for the more profitable and less suspicious calling of street trading in evening newspapers, since, to a lad of his intelligence, that afforded a means of earning money and simultaneously gathering alms in the shape of frequent extra half-pennies bestowed by purchasers of his papers who pitied his neglected appearance. He failed to keep his mother from again attending the Police Court on his behalf, however, by overlooking the Education Committee's bye-laws in the matter of school attendance, and put his estimable parent once more to the trouble of visiting the second-hand clothes shop, and the added expense this time of a fine—as the good woman indignantly said, "for not

sending a bad lad to school, as nobody can make go to school, try as you will; and I'm sure I'm sick of trying."

The same course of conduct was persisted in by the lad with the same result, until he realised that he had come to the end of his tether; the next false step would land him in an industrial school: he valued his liberty too highly to risk that; to everybody's astonishment he took a sudden and strong fancy for instruction, and no more complaints were made until he had proudly finished his scholastic career. Whether his brain was a little turned by his full freedom, or whether, by now being able to devote his whole time and energy to the sale of newspapers, he became inconveniently wealthy, it would be hard to say. Anyhow, he next got into a scrape for "gaming with coins," and had to pay a fine of half a crown. Shortly afterwards he had a quarrel with his mother, left home, and went to live in a common lodging-house. A month later the mother went abroad with a married man who had become fascinated with her, and whose wife was giving trouble in consequence. I do not think Harry saw or heard from her again.

In the lodging-house he got associated with a bad set, and was drifting steadily into serious crime. I had a long talk with him. His strong common-sense caused him to see that I was only anxious to befriend him. I offered him choice of a situation in the city, with good, clean, respectable lodgings, a place on a farm where he would be well cared for, or a berth on an ocean tramp steamer. He hesitated between the country and the sea; he was very fond of animals, and much attracted by the idea of having to tend horses and cows, but he ultimately decided in favour of the sea, beginning his life as a sailor five years ago.

When I saw him aboard his first ship just before

he went on his maiden voyage, he told me in a strange, shy manner, of his only regret now that the day had come for him to leave his old life behind. There was in the lodging-house where he had lived a consumptive lad who went out to sell newspapers when his health would allow, but was often unable to go for days together. Harry had given him aid to tide over many a time of stress, and now wondered what would become of him. "It'll be all right for me, going about in foreign parts and enjoying myself," he blurted out self-reproachfully; "but how will he go on?"

Harry's qualms were settled: the sick youth was given all the help and comfort possible in much better surroundings than the lodging-house till he was taken away, which was not until his friend returned for the first time from sea, and had visited him in the hospital. Later on, another lad who had been one of his old companions also died; that lad's mother had somehow won Harry's admiration and sympathy, and on the few occasions that he came to his native place between voyages, he made his home there to her great financial gain. A good woman indeed, this person had a wonderful influence over the bright, high-spirited sailor-lad who had taken her as his guardian and friend.

"She prays every night and morning, and she reads the Bible as regular as a man reads his newspaper," he told me once; "and I don't swear now; she talked to me about it, and I promised her I wouldn't. She asked me if I warn't frightened, always in danger, like, at sea; and I said I never thought much about danger. She said that was right enough, but I ought to think more about God who keeps us from danger. And I believe she's right, and I'm not going to swear any more."

Shall we be far wrong if our fancied picture sets him out as meeting death calmly and cheerily, think-

ing, if there was time to think, of the others, and then, with an ejaculatory prayer, yielding himself up to the eternal keeping of our merciful Redeemer? From the little I knew of him I think the end would come something like that. I am perfectly sure there would be no complaining; no cowardly shrinking; no regret.

In December 1900 a police officer called after midnight at the home of a man whose arrest was necessary because of his foolish contempt of the law shown in neglecting to pay certain fines inflicted for failing to secure the regular attendance of his children at school. The authorities had been very patient; the man had misinterpreted patience for weakness; the official midnight visit came as a rude awakening, but bore good fruit, inasmuch as the fines were paid, and the man was liberated before nine hours had passed. Used as he was to scenes of misery, the officer who effected the arrest was much moved by what he had seen in that home.

"It fair went to my heart," he said to me, "to see them poor children. Four of them were lying fast asleep, all in their wet rags, on an old sofa, as dirty as sweeps, and part covered with a piece of sacking taken up off the hearth. They were the four eldest, two boys and two girls; the other four were with their father and mother upstairs. I never saw such a kennel in my life. It stinks of muck and filth. Something ought to be done for the sake of the children. It isn't that they're poor and can't do any different. I've eight children, and I don't get half the wage that man gets. He never goes home under three pounds a week, and then there's what the kids bring in. Do you think anything can be done? It makes me feel right badly (ill) to think of it."

Being an experienced officer he was well aware of the difficulty of helping. I paid an early call, to find that the dwelling had been thoroughly cleaned from top to bottom within fourteen hours of the police officer's midnight visit. It was a two-roomed house, and there was little furniture, so that the task involved was not heavy, even including the bestowal of the coating of white-wash with which the walls and ceilings had been daubed. But what had been done so speedily emphasised the difficulty of dealing with the case. The sudden bringing about of that transformation showed the working of a mind acute enough to realise that trouble was possible as a consequence of the constable's observations, and to promptly destroy all evidence of dirt and filth in the home. The children had all been thoroughly cleansed, also; though still clothed in rags and without suitable beds and bedding, they appeared quite healthy and were certainly well fed. It was difficult, too, to controvert the mother's sage remark that "with poor folks, food is more than finery." Moreover the roaring fire, made up for the baking into bread of a large pan of dough which stood upon the hearth, and the stifling heat of the room, in which hundreds of flies buzzed though it was late December, proving that the fire was allowed to burn night and day, made it impossible to argue that, indoors at any rate, anybody, however clad, could well be cold. There was little that I could say that day. I was instinctively conscious that the mother, a woman of fine physique, and, though shabbily and untidily clad, by no means unprepossessing, had the power to do very much better for her children. How to persuade her to will to do what she easily could was the problem. For the moment I could do nothing save come away feeling rather foolish.

Having collected evidence corroborating the

constable's statement of the man's wages, and now certainly knowing that the two eldest lads earned eight shillings a week apiece by selling newspapers in the streets after school hours, I called again at the house when it was likely I should find the father at home. In the course of a brief but stormy interview, in which I sought to demonstrate to both parents that it was high time they bestirred themselves to provide decent sleeping accommodation and bedding and better clothing for the children, pointing out that ample means were at their disposal to attain all that was required, I discovered that the father, though reputed to be a skilful workman at a certain heavy trade, was a witless fool to argue with; and it is proverbially a sore thing to speak in the ears of a fool. Still the interview was not wholly without profit. I found that the man brought home the bulk of his wages. It was manifest that the mother was the person to be dealt with. The father might be dismissed, and any reference to him by the woman in attempting to excuse herself in the future safely ignored. I therefore informed her that I purposed calling twice a week to see how things went on, and that it would not be necessary for me to intrude when the father was at home. Although I tried to speak pleasantly enough, I cannot say that my proposal seemed specially welcome. Neither can I claim that I was received, even figuratively speaking, with open arms on any occasion during the weary weeks that followed. A gratifying maintenance of cleanliness in the home; the gradual provision of better clothing for the children, who continued to be well fed; and, finally, the removal of the family to a larger house with more bedrooms furnished with suitable beds and bedding, enabled me to put up with a certain churlishness with moderate equanimity. All this came about because the

mother was clever enough to realise that the law was sufficiently strong to compel it. She thought also that I possessed legal powers which I do not possess. It did not seem worth while correcting the error.

Having gone as far as that, she jibbed. When she pleased, she would lie in bed, careless how the children fared in the matter of breakfast before going to school; there was food in the house, and, as she said, "A woman can't get up if she can't, no matter how good her will is," so they must just manage. With eight children to tend, and the house to look after, it was impossible, she held, for her to cook proper dinners every day, or to bake the family bread regularly. I discovered in due course that she never did bake: a kindly neighbour had kneaded the dough and baked the supply I saw on my introductory visit, and there had been no further baking. Except for an occasional fry of sausages or beef-steak, everything was bought ready cooked—a sure sign of hopeless thriftlessness and extravagance where home baking and cooking are at all possible. Then, "with so many mouths to fill, and only the father's bit of money coming in," she held it to be absolutely necessary for the elder boys, "great lads of twelve and thirteen," to earn something "towards their keep," so they must sell newspapers. "They had plenty to eat, and a drop of rain wouldn't hurt them." "About crazed" with the care of so large a family, she held that she would surely be worried into an asylum unless she had a little recreation now and then. Accordingly, the eldest girl, aged eleven, must take charge of the house every evening while the mother sought relaxation, sometimes in the father's company, sometimes with neighbours, in music hall or public-house. She had borne the children; she looked after them in the days of

their helplessness; she trained them early to look after themselves; what more could be expected of her? She had no notion at all of mothering them, and I failed utterly to instil any such notion, no matter how hard I laboured.

In truth the task was beyond my power, or the power of any person unable to be perpetually in the society of such a parent. Women of this type are left too much to themselves; too much, that is, among neighbours whose ways of going on are of the same standard. Whole colonies are formed, permeated with incredibly low notions of parental responsibility and privilege, and children suffer in consequence. Our punishment for allowing this to continue is that the children in their turn propagate the evil, which increases and will increase until a remedy is applied—a remedy involving some sacrifice, but ready to hand.

I am setting out at some length the circumstances of this case because it is typical of hundreds in every great city. Driven out to find a living in the streets, loosely controlled at home, and acquiring early a spurious form of independence, every one of those eight children has been charged in our Police Courts with offences more or less grave. The eldest girl was convicted of prostitution before she was seventeen years old: she is now off the streets, but living unmarried with a widower twice her own age. When I urged that they should marry, she told me, "My mother was never married and she has managed right enough." The first part of the claim was true; the second, arguable: of the strength of the mother's example there can be no doubt.

I successively sent four of the lads to sea, after repeated convictions for offences mostly petty. They all four confessed to finding the discipline at first irksome, but it undoubtedly taught them the duty, necessity, and high privilege of regular

employment, and saved them from degenerating into dangerously useless unemployables. The father sickened; unable to resume work, he was forced to accept indoor relief offered by the Guardians, and shortly afterwards died. The mother was at last driven to beg me to find work here for her boys so that they might come back from sea and assist in carrying on the home. I agreed to do so upon terms. There were still three children constantly getting into scrapes, and in danger of becoming ruined,—two girls of fifteen and seventeen, and a lad of fourteen years old. My conditions were that the two girls should enter a home to be trained for domestic service, that the boy should finally and definitely cease street-trading and accept regular employment in a workshop, and that the sons returning from sea should come to a house situated in a better part of the city, quite three miles away from their old home. The terms were accepted and honourably kept. The girls are at the present highly respectable general servants in good situations. The younger lad took the offered employment and satisfactorily discharged his duties. The four elder sons came home to rough labouring work secured for them, and, in a better environment, and steadied by their training at sea, delighted me by earning the approval of their masters for conscientious application to duty. Still the mother remained idle, careless, self-indulgent. The new arrangement had been at work for eighteen months, and I marvelled that things went so well, the lads continuing quite cheerfully to maintain a home which I should have thought, through the mother's indifference, to be hardly worth the trouble. Then the war broke out.

On the fifth of August, the four who had been seamen called upon me. Jim, the eldest of them, had received a message from an old skipper

begging him to go and lend a hand in the work of mine-sweeping. He had determined at once to go, and his brothers had determined to go with him and take their chance of getting berths. They brought me a sum of money out of which to make weekly payments to their mother. In less than a week I learnt that all of them were usefully employed in the North Sea.

All through the winter they laboured bravely at their posts, sending many a cheery letter. I have one before me, very striking, when we consider the upbringing of its writer. It is from Sam, the second boy: he had evidently been reading of what transpired in Belgium and Northern France:—

“If we keep their blooming mines from blowing our warships up, our warships will keep the German devils from getting to England, or Scotland, or Ireland. There must be none of the sort of goings on in our country as have gone on in some parts. When it snows, hails, rains, or blows its hardest, we don’t care a tinker’s curse. We go on. What does it matter if a few of us do die? To die as we shall die, if we get blown up, will be nothing to the way our mothers and sisters will suffer if the Germans get to England. I believe our English women and lasses would scratch and thump a bit: but what could they do against devils like these Germans are? Don’t you worry about us. We’re all right. It keeps us up to the mark to feel that what bit of risk there is we are running to keep our mothers and sisters safe. God bless them! Anybody’s mother and sister, and everybody’s, specially in old England. It’s grand to feel we’re helping them!”

Running his “bit of risk” for his mother and his sisters’ sake, and for sake of dear old England: so he still continues, and so continue his three

brothers, while the youngest boy has felt the irresistible call of country, and gone to train in the new army, having somehow persuaded the recruiting officer to let his sixteen years count as nineteen. May they all be blessed and prospered, and may speedy victory be vouchsafed their labours, and a safe return to a truly grateful country.

Peter, a member of another mine-sweeping trawler's crew, was the son of parents who had drifted apart. His father ignored his existence. The man who had taken his father's place greatly disliked Peter, whose mother was too much occupied in alternately contemplating and seeking to drown in drink her private miseries to devote much attention to her son.

Husband and wife lived in the same street in houses only a hundred yards apart, and frequently passed each other with the utmost indifference on their way to the homes and partners each had chosen to take the place of the other. Judging by the results of these illicit unions it did not appear that the second choice of either party was happier than the first. Neglect, drunkenness, dirt, debt—these prevailed in both houses alike from the day that I knew them.

I have noticed that where there is a legal bar to marriage, persons living together as man and wife almost invariably share a wretched home. But that is not usually so where a couple live together unmarried without the existence of a legal bar. In the latter case the rule is to find a home decently comfortable. Such exceptions as that provided in the case just described merely go to prove the rule. And it is generally the man's fault when such couples remain unmarried. Many a time I have endeavoured to urge on such

a man the desirability of his marrying, and more than once I have been asked—

“Do you take me for a fool?”

I told a man of whom I have something to say soon, and who asked me that very question—

“Well, I hope I should not have been rude enough to say so in your own house, but since you put it as strong as that I am inclined to think you are. Here is a clean, tidy woman by whom you have six children. Why not marry and live respectably?”

I have never forgotten his reply—

“Marry,” he said, “not me! While we’re as we are, she knows she’s got to keep things decent. She knows I shouldn’t stay a day in a pig-sty, and that she’s no claim on me, only so long as she does her part.

“If I got tied to her, how am I to know as she wouldn’t get like a lot more about here? Happen she’d get everything into a mess soon, and have a house like a dog-kennel, and put all my things in pawn, and get me in debt everywhere. No, thank you, we’ll stop as we are. While she does right to me, I’ll do right to her. As soon as she goes wrong, my name is Johnny Walker.”

No doubt a deplorably low view to take, but taken because his experience was limited to matrimonial conditions only too frequently obtaining in a sad and depressing section of society. I am convinced that nothing so greatly tends to lower the sanctity of marriage in the popular mind as the evasion of its patent responsibilities and duties.

It will readily be understood that a lower type of man cohabits with a married than a single woman, and a lower type of woman with a married than a single man. Hence it comes about naturally that one finds wretched homes in one set of cases and fairly decent homes in another.

The pity is that the homes of the lawfully married do not set a uniformly good example if only for the comparatively unimportant reason that the unmarried woman living illicitly with the unmarried man usually cherishes a deep desire for the legal status of wife.

But I have digressed from Peter. He was left to his own devices when he had finished attending school. No one took the trouble to start him in employment. He wandered about killing time, and at length found congenial company among older lads of an idle and mischievous sort. He was not particular whether he went home at night or not, and not missed if he failed to go. He was caught by the police assisting his companions in robbing a warehouse. His companions were sent to reformative institutions, while he was given over to my care.

It soon became evident to me that he would have no chance of doing better so long as he remained at home. It mattered nothing what sort of situation I obtained for him; his mother caused him to lose it from neglecting to provide him with food. He was anxious to keep his work at the first, started off to it at six o'clock on four successive mornings with no breakfast, and reached home at noon almost fainting to find no meal awaiting him. A bit of bread and dripping was hastily procured, and having eaten that for his dinner he went back to work, to return at tea-time to an empty dwelling. When the man she lived with started for his work, always "on nights," Peter's mother invariably went to a public-house, staying there until she was forced by the landlord to retire.

Under such conditions no one could expect the lad to do any good, and finding he had a taste for the sea, I got him on a ship. He was happy there from the first day. When the call came,

he was able to render the valuable service of an experienced deck-hand in seeking to clear the seas of mines. I am indebted to him for the following account of how that work is done:—

“A Royal Naval Officer commands a group of trawlers,” he says, “and his ship goes ahead to direct our work. The other ships move in pairs abreast of each other and follow astern. The sweep-wire is sunk as deep as we want it in the water between each pair of trawlers by what we call kites. They are made of wood; they act in the water like an ordinary kite does in the air, and you can make them go any depth you like. The kites and the sweep-wire catch the mines and either bring them up with their moorings or break them away. Anyhow they are brought to the surface. Sometimes the sweep-wire breaks because the strain is too heavy. But we have found out where the mines are, and it doesn't take long to deal with them then with new wire. When we catch them we drag them to one side of the channel and destroy them by rifle-fire. The bullets that hit the detonators explode the mines right away. Those that hit what they call the buoyancy chamber puncture and flood the mine, and it goes to the bottom like lead and gives nobody any more trouble, so it doesn't matter much which way they are served.

“The trawlers draw about twelve feet of water and sometimes strike a mine, though the mines are mostly laid deeper. When a trawler strikes it is mostly all up. If she is lucky and the explosion is forward under the bows, she may be towed into harbour; but if she strikes amidships or in the stern,

she has no chance, and the men in the engine- and boiler-room have a poor look-out. We on deck always feel that we have the best job of it in spite of the cold and wet."

That was written in January. By March Peter's short life was ended. Three members of the crew were saved, but no one knew how death found Peter and the five shipmates who perished with him. The explosion occurred when it was dark, and the survivors escaped almost by a miracle, the trawler sinking in a few seconds.

There went down with Peter a youth whom I had got him to take an interest in, and of whom he had grown very fond, who volunteered with him for mine-sweeping, and who keenly enjoyed that hazardous work in spite of the lugubrious letters it pleased him to favour me with from time to time. His name was Stanley. He was a son of that couple I have mentioned in telling of the man's antipathy to entering the bonds of matrimony.

I met with Stanley after the police had met with him sleeping in a brick-kiln and arrested him, partly to save him from risk of losing his life if he remained there. He had, for some reason I was never able to fathom, taken a violent dislike to his mother, and steadily refused to promise the magistrates that he would go home "and do properly." To impress him with a sense of the unwisdom of repeating his offence he was severely lectured, promised three months' imprisonment if he appeared again on a similar charge, and then handed over to me that I might see what could be made of him.

When I saw the mother she told me that the lad had a good home, as indeed I could see for myself, and that she was unable to account

for the fact that he failed to appreciate it. It did not appear that he was bullied or ill-treated. Up to a certain point he had gone on steadily and well. He had worked in one situation for eighteen months. Of late, however, he had grown careless and insolent, had given up his work, and set his parents at defiance.

It was when I consulted the parents on the question of gratifying the lad's desire to go to sea that I made the suggestion of marriage so ill received by the father. No objection was raised to my proposal for the lad's welfare; perhaps that success encouraged me to make the attempt that failed.

Stanley did not find the sea at all to his taste, and deserted his ship at Buenos Ayres, about as morally dangerous a place as he could have hit upon. He tasted there the very dregs of bitterness, and, starved and ragged and friendless, after a fortnight, stowed himself away on a ship returning to England. He was speedily discovered and made to earn his passage home with good interest. In spite of that he took a strong fancy to the skipper, and by a strange chance found Peter a member of the crew. Although belonging to the same city they had not previously met, and did not in fact know each other when I saw them in port together. Finding that Stanley would gladly remain on that ship, I was able to arrange matters and to leave him with a light heart, Peter having promised to give an eye to him. From then they became great friends.

As a specimen of the kind of letter he was wont to send me, I extract the following from his last message:—

“They (he means the magistrates) said they'd give me three months next time they caught me sleeping out in a brickyard.

They ought to give me three years for coming to sleep out here; 'cos you can't sleep to any sense, it's that cold; and the trawler twists and twirls about that much, trying to dodge them submarines, it makes you feel fair silly. You don't know when you're going to run into a mine, neither; and it's that dark when it is dark—no lights nowhere. I do think we're a lot of fools going in for this sort of fishing. Of course somebody has to do it. The Germans would be all right if they could have everything their own way. I reckon people at home think as we might as well do it as anybody else, and if we do get blown out ourselves, what does it matter so long as the Germans are licked?"

The last sentence faithfully represented his feelings. All the rest simply meant that he was letting off steam. Peter, brave and intelligent, honest, and no mean judge of character, said he never had a better shipmate than Stanley.

I wish I could say that the mother of either lad showed the least appreciation of her son's heroism. Both received the news of their bereavement with absolute indifference, save that they bestirred themselves to find what outstanding wages were due to the lads, or what compensation they could claim.

But not all my mine-sweeping heroes have mothers and sisters of whom it is impossible to be proud. A noble woman known to me, married to as vile a wretch as ever disgraced the term man, was pinching and scheming to make ends meet when I paid her my first visit if haply I might render any service in the way

of obviating hardships for the family while her husband served the five years' penal servitude to which he had been sentenced. She was maintaining herself, her two boys of ten and twelve, and her one girl of eight years old, by making shirts at an absurdly low rate of payment; still she was much better off when her husband was in prison than when he was not, since she was relieved of the burden of providing the food for him which when at liberty he declined to earn for himself. During the three years and nine months her husband was away,—like most accomplished and thorough rascals, his conduct in prison earned for him the remission of a portion of his sentence,—I kept in touch with the family. The children, always beautifully clean and tidily clothed, regularly attended a Sunday School, and I secured a situation in which he would have a prospect of learning a trade for each of the lads as the time came for him to leave day-school. Her earnings augmented by the boys' wages, the mother had a brief space of comparative happiness and prosperity.

Then befell the calamity of the husband's return. He deliberately and decisively refused an offer of employment made through myself on the first day of his return. He wanted to choose his employment in a manner which showed he had made up his mind to do no good. He next found fault with the boys' earnings, and, failing to obtain higher rates than were current in the trade for lads of their age, took them away from their situations, and started them working in a coal mine. For two years he lived in idleness, drinking heavily, and acting with doubtful honesty, but never contributing a penny towards the support of the house, while perpetually laying the earnings of the family under tribute

to supply in part the means for his carousals. Ill-fed and wretched, the poor lads toiled on at the mine and the mother at her sewing; the little articles of luxury and ornament procured while the worthless father was in prison were taken to the pawn-shop; their clothing shabby and patched, the children no longer found their way to Sunday School—also, their father forbade them to attend. Fortunately the father was seldom in the house; it was possible for the mother to read the Bible on Sundays to her children and to pray with them.

One of the lads fell ill. He remained away from work for three weeks, the father continually accusing him of idleness, and finally beating him brutally. This was more than the other boy could bear without protest, and for protesting the father cruelly beat him also. During the following night the lads ran away from home, leaving a most touching note for their mother, explaining on tear-stained pages how much they felt leaving her, “but if we stay with him any longer it will kill you to see him ill-use us, and then we shall kill him, so it’s best to go now,” and promising to write frequently telling what they did and how they fared. They tramped to Hull, seeking work and finding none, but somehow picked up a fancy for the sea before falling into the hands of the police as “wandering abroad without visible means of support.” Brought back home by the authorities, fortunately during their father’s absence, their mother hurried with them to my rooms, where their newly-acquired fancy for the sea made it easy to suggest a solution of the difficulty, since the mother agreed that it was far better they should go right away.

By a fortunate chance I was able to return them to Hull that very night. It was happily possible

to get both on the same boat, and they made splendid sailors from the outset.

The father was mystified for some time by their disappearance. When he learned the truth he came to me to demand by what right I had interfered with his family affairs—and was sorry he came. Within a month he was arrested on a charge of larceny from the person of a delicate woman, his peculiarly favourite form of crime. Possibly he really felt that my interference with his family affairs had driven him again into the evil courses, in that he held I had deprived him of his boys' wages: certainly he told the Court that tale when he came to take his trial on the charge. But an unsympathetic Judge refused to accept the excuse, suggesting, indeed, the strong possibility that, having done no work since he was last in prison, he had committed other similar offences while at liberty—as there were ample grounds for thinking he had—and sentencing him to a further term of penal servitude.

The lads now thought of returning home, remembering the former happy days of their father's absence, and feeling anxious to be a help and support to their mother, who, to my astonishment, desired them to remain at sea. I enquired why she wished that, and found her to be burdened by the feeling that her day upon earth was nearly done; consequently she desired her boys to be far away from the father's influence when he came out of prison. She had written also to an old mistress asking if her daughter, now nearly fifteen years old, might be taken into the service of a family bearing an honoured name in Britain. To the mother's great joy, the thing she longed for was arranged, and the girl's future safety and happiness assured.

Sharing her home with a blind, feeble, woman-lodger whose only income was an old age pension,

the noble mother still worked on, her one delight in life being the receipt of letters from her children. The old woman died, and the lads, returning for a holiday shortly afterwards, found their mother worn out with nursing added to work already too much for her strength. They were on the point of settling down at home again, in spite of her expressed desire to the contrary, when war was declared, and the need for men on the trawlers became manifest. There was then no possibility of changing the mother's mind, and no longer any desire on the boys' part to do so. Before they went back they told me proudly that she had said to them, "I never dared to hope that God would be so good to me. To think that, after all, I can do something to retrieve the shame your father has brought upon his family, and give my lads for England! Oh, it's splendid. Go, my lads, and God bless you, and help you to do your duty."

They wrote to her very frequently: after the war had lasted five months they spent a week-end at home, their sister also joining them. When the day came for the boys' return both were plainly filled with a strange presentiment that they would see their mother again no more upon earth: they said nothing of it to her, as it was accident to themselves they thought of. Scarcely had they got to sea again when their mother in a fit of coughing burst a blood-vessel. She lingered for a while, her daughter remaining to watch over her with tender care, helped and encouraged by the mistress who highly esteemed both parent and child, and kept the girl's place vacant until the end came. Money was not lacking: the generosity of the sons, and the withdrawal from the savings bank of the daughter's little hoard carefully gathered out of her small earnings, provided for all that was needed. On a day in March news came from the lads telling that they were in the

Mediterranean Sea, ready to set out to serve Britain gloriously, if humbly and dangerously, on mine-sweepers in the Dardanelles.

"Read it over again to me," the mother murmured continually with pathetic pride, and over and over again, many times that morning the letter was read to her. About noon, as the girl was leaving the sick-room to prepare food, the patient feebly asked for the letter to be given into her hands. Raising it to her lips with trembling fingers, she kissed it lovingly, and exclaimed, with a strength of voice and gladness of heart such as she had appeared incapable of, "Oh, it is beautiful—beautiful—my sons doing their duty as good, brave men should: daring, if it need be, to die like men! Nellie, you mustn't grieve if God takes them. They'll never be more ready to go than now; and He can never take them from grander work on earth than fighting in His cause for their country. And we shall all meet at last safe in heaven."

Blinded with tears, half of pride, half of fear, the girl left the room on her errand. A few minutes later she returned, to find her mother lying calm and still, a sweet glad smile upon her white, worn face, the precious letter clasped in her stiffening fingers—sleeping.

II.

WITH THE BRITISH EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

"I THOUGHT I'd call, sir, just to let you know I'm off."

The speaker was one of many reservists good enough to let me know when the great war recalled them to the colours. Returning to civil life about a year before with the rank of sergeant and a high character for conduct and ability as a soldier, he had found employment at once and settled down to civilian duties in a manner which won whole-hearted admiration and earned him rapid promotion. He was now leaving an excellent situation without regret. His country's need found him ready to help with heart and soul and strength.

He was specially interesting to me, since he was the very first lad I had helped to his feet in this city. That was sixteen years before, when he was charged among others with lighting a fire where he ought not to have lighted a fire. He had, in fact, with certain companions playing at soldiers, seized a wood on the outskirts of the city and encamped there. But an enemy picket in the shape of a gamekeeper observed the glow of the camp-fire. Gathering overwhelming forces, the enemy swooped down on the invaders as darkness fell, making prisoners of the entire company. A court sitting next day assessed damage to divers trees

mutilated to provide fuel during the occupation of the invaded territory. The prisoners were ordered to pay three shillings apiece and to remain as hostages until the money was forthcoming.

Thomas, the leader of the raiders, was a fine lad of thirteen years old. His father had been an industrious artisan until about four years previously, when he became affected with locomotor-ataxy. Feeling himself to be failing some three months before he was compelled to give up his situation, he consulted his wife as to the best preparation they could make in view of the impending calamity.

They had saved about a hundred pounds. Their family consisted of Thomas and a little girl a year old when the father's illness first manifested itself. They decided that their wisest course was to take a small shop for the sale of groceries and cooked food in a populous artisan district. It was felt that such a shop would secure for them a means of livelihood when the man's work must be relinquished. They looked to him being able to help still in the business.

Unfortunately the disease caused him to take to his bed by the time the shop had been opened four months. The double burden of tending husband and shop fell upon the brave wife's shoulders. The Poor Law came to the rescue with a little help. Still she had a hard struggle. How she bore labour and sorrow that would crush most people was shown when she said to me on the day that I took Thomas out of captivity—

"The people about here are very good: they come to me for most of their bits of things, and the Guardians allow my husband four shillings a week out-relief: so we manage very nicely. We've a lot to be thankful for. I often wonder what we should have done if we hadn't been given the bit of warning which gave us time to think about taking

this place. But God is good: He told us what to do, and He's sent us a living ever since."

She invited me to see her husband, whom I found in as neat and attractive a bedroom as I have seen anywhere. He was somewhat querulous, as was natural lying alone for hours, day by day, year after year. His wife, possessed though she was of the best will in the world to relieve his solitude, could not often or for long tear herself from her manifold duties downstairs. And they were indeed manifold. They were heavy, too. She kneaded, and baked in an ordinary household oven, six stones of bread every day except Sunday, for sale in the shop, for which she also boiled two hams a week. She kept the stock fresh, clean, and attractive, and served scores of small purchasers daily with unfailing cheerfulness and good humour, though they were occasionally trying enough. She was up every morning by six o'clock to begin her day's work. Her family washing, no light task with a sick-bed ever to be kept spotless, and her household cleaning, she did entirely with her own hands. Compelled by competition to keep her shop open till eleven at night, she never got to bed until after that hour save on the Day of Rest. Fortunately her children had ailed nothing, and until Thomas got into this scrape had caused her not a moment's anxiety.

"She's a good one, and no mistake," her husband said, "but I'm a heavy cross for her to carry, and I wish I were at home. I'm only in the way here. They'd be a lot better off without me."

It was a pity he should speak like that in her presence. He did not mean to further burden that poor, brave heart. He realised what he had done when she hurried from the room to hide her tears.

"There," he said, "I wish I'd bitten my tongue out: I'm everlastingly saying the same sort of

thing, though I know it hurts her so. But I seem as if I can't help it. Every time she comes in to bring me something or see if I want anything, as she does a score times a day, I feel what a thing it is to be forced to lie here idle, and she working herself to death; and I have to burst out sometimes."

He was not always so, his wife said. He was more liable to talk like that when others were present. When she was alone with him he was often plainly suppressing his impatience and striving to speak cheerfully.

The fact that I was able to get Thomas a start in fairly remunerative employment which also gave prospect of leading to a useful career, and that the magistrate who felt bound to order the payment of the three shillings, when he knew the plight of the family, himself discharged the penalty, gave the afflicted father some satisfaction in what proved to be his last little while upon earth.

The Guardians' grant of relief ceased with the man's life, the income from the shop, aided by the money Thomas now earned as wages, being regarded as adequate for the needs of the family. As a matter of fact, the family income was enough to allow ends to meet, but not enough to allow of any saving for a rainy day. For another similar shop had been opened in the same locality, and first because its proprietor sold goods on Sundays, which the widow had all along, and still, refused to do, and next, because her husband being now dead, they held themselves relieved of certain obligations to lend a helping hand, several of her customers transferred their patronage to the new-comer.

Thomas, therefore, had few luxuries. His mother kept both his sister and himself neatly dressed, and they never went short of plain wholesome food, but a penny a week for Thomas

and a halfpenny for Mary was all the pocket-money she could spare. I will frankly confess that I increased this allowance somewhat as I called week by week. One may do something towards winning affection by walking when he might ride, and bestowing the saved coppers upon young people. And to win children's love and to brighten their lives is, in my judgment, worth walking a very long way. Moreover, these children had a knack of saving up every coin they received, and giving their mother pleasant surprises by purchasing trifling things they knew to be wanted in the house; and that added to the pleasure of putting an occasional copper in their way.

I also became responsible for fees enabling Thomas to join a company of the invaluable Boys' Brigade, in which also I secured the enrolment of the other members of that force which he had commanded when the enemy turned up so inopportunately and suppressed the invasion. Regular work, the night school, and the Boys' Brigade served to keep all these fifteen lads out of further trouble. They formed helpful friendships with masters and instructors. The great call came. Thomas, as we have seen, rejoined the Colours. Thirteen of the others enlisted in Lord Kitchener's army. The solitary lad remaining tried hard to pass the doctor, but severe and chronic lameness rendered him unfit for military service. Nevertheless, he has consistently laboured month by month for a hundred hours a week to help in keeping the fighting forces supplied with munitions, and declares his determination to continue so to do while the need lasts and health and strength remain. So much for the Boys' Brigade. We shall see its worthy work in the lives of many others whose brief story it is my privilege to tell. No organisation that I know of has done

more to instil into lads' minds a high conception of patriotic duty.

It was slackness in his particular trade at a period of general depression that caused Thomas to enlist when he was nineteen years old. His wages, sadly reduced with his working hours, were hopelessly insufficient for his maintenance, and, no early improvement appearing probable, he declined to burden his mother with his partial support. His mother, herself a soldier's daughter, while regretting the necessity for their parting, thought his decision wise and honourable, as indeed it was, though foolish folk were to be found who whispered that they "had always been afraid Thomas wasn't very fond of work." As if the fact that he joined the army precisely because work failed did not of itself prove the very reverse!

Trade became more depressed. When Thomas had been eighteen months a soldier, thousands were out of work in his native city, and energetic measures were in operation for relieving distress. I had a small part in helping, and I saw many affecting scenes of want. Perhaps I became a little run down in consequence.

Anyhow, I one day entered a tram-car bound for a part of the city in which I had then no business earthly that I knew of. When the car reached its destination I woke up to the fact that I was not where I would be. Then it crossed my mind that the mother of Thomas lived near. It seemed well to pay her a call since I was in that locality.

It was just turned noon when I reached the little shop, beautifully clean and attractive as ever, but lacking something to my mind as I entered the door. For a moment I could not tell quite what was missing; then, looking round, I noticed there was no bread and no ham, usually

the staples of trade there, and I knew at once what was wrong. It was the old story. Customers had got into debt. Money consequently became owing by the widow to her own creditors, who had stopped supplies, and ruin stared her in the face. I did not need to be told that. I could read it in what I saw, as the representatives of creditors had been reading for long.

As I stood there just for a moment before knocking to signal my presence, I heard a child's voice through the partly-closed door of the room behind the shop say—

"Then there's no dinner again, mother dear? Well, never mind; don't cry, mother; I'm not a bit hungry, really; I can manage very well until tea-time. If we ask God to send us help, I'm sure He will, and perhaps it will come by then."

I felt in an awkward position. I had a right to be in the shop, but not perhaps to hear what was being said. Yet I could neither bring myself to interrupt by announcing my presence nor refrain from listening. Mother and child seemed to kneel down. Then Mary's voice began again in sweet, pathetic, confident prayer—

"O Father, we don't mind having no dinner to-day; and we are not a bit worse off for having none yesterday. But please hear us now and send us help, for we are badly in need, especially of things for the shop. Help us, O God, soon, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen."

What could I do? What, but softly leave the place to return with ample fare for several days, and listen with a full heart while Mary told me why she knew that God would help. I heard the worst the widow had to fear. She owed her creditors twenty pounds. If that sum were paid her supplies would be renewed. I left the house regarding Mary's simple faith as pathetic and beautiful, but (I may as well confess it) as scarcely

logical, seeing that I was there to hear and answer, and that consequently there was need of nought beyond human aid.

But I remembered that I had gone to the place undesignedly, nay, against my intention, and I believed the child was far wiser than I, when four hours later an envelope containing a cheque for thirty pounds was placed in my hands. There was a letter also, of which here is an extract:

“Why I send the money by hand I cannot say. Something tells me that it must go to you at once. If you have one specially needy case requiring substantial help, where such a sum would be most useful, I had rather you would spend the whole amount on that.”

I have no more to add, save that the widow was completely re-established in her business, which has steadily grown more prosperous, and now supports Mary and herself in decent comfort and respectability, and that my own belief in the power of prayer is a more living and robust thing to-day than once it was.

Thomas was of course told of this incident, and the part his mother described me as taking in it not unnaturally increased his regard for me. He came to my rooms as often as he visited his home on furlough. He was a strapping, well-set-up fellow of six feet high, and every inch a soldier. I never looked upon a manlier face. It was my happiness to be able frequently to congratulate him on his progress in the army, and I was always entitled to show appreciation of his consistent thoughtfulness for his mother and sister, since I knew that, so long as his help was at all needed, he regularly and generously contributed towards the upkeep of the home.

When he was placed on the reserve he returned to his native town, bringing with him a wife he was evidently and rightly proud of, and it was a

real pleasure to me to have a hand in securing for the happy couple the tenancy of a pleasant little house not far from the mother's shop. It also fell to my lot to introduce Thomas to a master whose good opinion he won at once, and who promoted him to an excellent position. When war was declared he relinquished all quite cheerfully. His master generously undertook to see that his young wife received half his wages, and to keep his situation open until he returned; so Thomas had no fear that she and the infant daughter he must leave in going forth at the call of duty would suffer poverty.

But even then there was more than enough involved in parting from wife and child, and mother and sister, to go on so hazardous a venture as his intelligence told him this must be. There was no trace of unwillingness or regret in his voice when he told me he had called to let me know he was off. When we parted, he said he hoped it would not be long before we met again, and soon I heard him whistling merrily as he left the street. I was not present at a tenderer parting at the railway station shortly afterwards, but I gathered that he showed similar hopefulness to those dear and precious to him, and they came away with pride of possession of a hero overmastering natural sorrow.

The hero kept his family in no long suspense. Before he had left them a month they learned how he fell fighting to the last against overwhelming odds in the never-to-be-forgotten victorious retreat from Mons. "He died as a brave man should die and would love to die," his commanding officer told in a letter that his widow will cherish as long as she lives.

"And now," that noble little Ulster woman said to me when I handed the letter back. "I'm going to live with mother. Mary and

I will do the work, and she must take a rest. Between us we will manage everything, easy as play. It's time she was easing off a wee bit, poor soul. And you'll be calling and seeing her, consoling her a bit the whiles, for she's fairly heart-broke, poor creature, and no wonder."

With her prodigal good nature, she wished to give me a Testament returned to her among her husband's relics. I had given it to him when he was a lad. It was well thumbed, and contained many passages carefully marked by an attentive reader. He had carried it with him to the field on which he fell. There was a stained page which seemed to suggest that his dying eyes might have rested there. It was touching to feel that my token of friendship had quite possibly given comfort to him at the last. But it was much too precious a gift now for me to take from her who offered it. She quite understood me.

"It shall go with me, then, till I die," she said; "and Norah shall have it after me. We'll just keep it always to remind us of him."

The mother and the sister-in-law find the assistance of Thomas's wife to be all she promised it should be. My list of widows, mothers, children, and sisters of fallen soldiers grows distressingly long. Yet there is this consolation: none are in poverty through their irreparable loss. Many have found in ministering to others the surest means of gaining comfort for themselves. And such is the zeal with which those whom Thomas has left seek to mutually help one another, that their home is the happiest spot I can conceive of, notwithstanding their great sorrow. If a thought of sadness arises, listening to the prattle of the sweet, beautiful baby girl, who is never to recognise a father's face, or hear his voice, or feel his kiss in this world, even that is lost in the joy

of the certainty that the affectionate care and training bestowed upon her by such a mother, grandmother, and aunt will combine to make her worthy of the hero from whom she sprang.

Such is the short biography of the first lad to whom it was my privilege to lend a helping hand. Of the many I know who have shared in the good fight for Britain he was first to die; first and perhaps most worthy, if it be permissible to select one individual hero from a glorious company of heroes who have cheerfully laid down their lives.

About the time when Thomas enlisted in the army two youths of eighteen came under my notice from being charged with stealing turnips. They worked at a colliery a few miles outside the city. Their nearest way from work lay across certain turnip-fields, and hot and thirsty, they found the succulent roots an irresistible temptation. No doubt most persons would regard this as a venial offence. But most persons do not happen to be farmers living near a great town. What is easily to be overlooked in isolated cases becomes an intolerable hardship when practised by multitudes. It was proved here that more than forty tons of turnips had been similarly taken from this particular farm. It was not, of course, alleged that all the damage had been done by these two youths, but having been caught it was asked that a penalty should be inflicted on them such as might deter others from doing as they had done.

The magistrate dealt more leniently with the case than the farmer expected or the youths hoped for. He was an experienced stipendiary, skilful in distinguishing between mischief and crime, and the very soul of kindness. None that I met who had ever been before him failed to cherish a lasting admiration and regard for one whom they

realised instinctively to be thoroughly just and a perfect gentleman.

The lads had started working at the colliery because other employment had failed. Even there they were unable to work except when youths who had regular places did not turn up. Both belonged to families keenly feeling the prevalent trade depression. Their fathers, labouring men earning small wages at best, were both wholly unemployed. They had brothers earning a little which, with their own wages, must suffice to provide bread for all until better days came.

There were other collieries in the neighbourhood more short of labour. It was possible to introduce these youths to employers able to give both them and their fathers regular work. After a while a younger brother of each lad got a situation there. The fathers liked pit work better than their former employment; the younger lads found it to suit them admirably, but my special charges, while giving satisfaction for twelve months, were never really at home in their situations.

Presently I found the reason. They had set their minds, their excellent mothers told me, "on soldiering." They were "bent on going to foreign parts." Evidently the thrifty, honest, but not very intelligent parents regarded that as a calamity. I could not subscribe to that opinion. I used every means to effect a change of view. In the end the lads were told to please themselves whether they went or not.

I am afraid the recruiting officer traded on their thirst for adventure when they presented themselves at his office. When they told me they had enlisted they certainly thought they would shortly find themselves in India. And both their mothers expressed the hope that now they had their hearts' desire and were "off to foreign parts" they would be satisfied. As a matter of fact, during their

whole service with the Colours they got no further from England than the Emerald Isle. I received frequent calls from them when home on furlough. All things considered, I found them well satisfied with a soldier's life, and as their parents regarded Ireland as a foreign country, they were not humiliated where they could best pose as experienced travellers. Still they hankered after real foreign service, and when drafted into the reserve came home to express to me their feeling that trouble was brewing abroad, and their hope that they would soon be needed there. They were great admirers of Earl Roberts, and had a more intelligent grasp of the greatness and soundness of his plans to meet the nation's needs than the average man of tenfold better education. They had been in the reserve only three months when their instinct proved right and their hopes were fulfilled.

During those three months they worked steadily in employment I easily secured for them, and found time to take to themselves wives. Then in that famous second week of August 1914 they turned up like so many others to tell me they were off to make use of the military training they had received, and to worthily uphold their country's honour as it proved on many a stricken field.

Like Thomas, they took part in the retreat from Mons, but unlike him, they both escaped without a scratch, though they fought in the thick of the struggle with desperate valour. They had a share in the battle of the Marne, and throughout the long winter manfully helped to hold the trenches in Flanders. Here is a letter written by Ernest, serving there side by side with his comrade, Charlie, during those dreary months:

"This morning a fowl came right up to our trenches and fair asked me to take it. You could see it didn't mean to go to the German trench, because it was a lot nearer to them

than to us when first we clapped eyes on it. Only when it smelt them it ran to us as fast as its legs would come. It was a rare tender fowl and all. Our officer said nought. Charlie said as Mr Welby (the genial magistrate who had tried the pair on their solitary appearance in the Police Court) would have said, 'Three months'—but I don't think he would—not out here—when it wasn't pinching—only taking on a recruit."

Always cheery and bright, the fowl recruiting officer wrote again a couple of months later:

"We're out of the trenches now for a bit—Charlie and me. We're hoping to get back to our horses and our proper work in a day or two (they are cavalrymen); and then you see if we don't make the beggars sit up. They've been using poisonous gas, and lots of our Canadians have been killed with the murderous stuff; then there's the *Iusitania* they've sunk with hundreds of women and children on board. All this to put to what we've seen with our own eyes in France and Belgium of their devil's work. Well, they've piled on a bit on the slate, and we're the chaps that's going to rub the score right off. You may put your last shilling on that, sir, for it's a dead cert."

I did no betting on the matter, although I readily accepted the genuineness of the tip. For one thing, I do not bet; for another, I know of no bookmaker who is unpatriotic or foolish enough to risk his money against the certainty that our gallant soldiers will in good time clean that awful slate.

Similar statements of what is working in our heroes' minds are contained in many a letter before me.

"I'm sick and tired of reading of strikes

in England," one man writes. "I can't think what the strikers are made of, or what on earth they're after. I should have thought that when they'd read of what we had to put up with at Mons, and then at the Marne, and after that all through the winter, starving and nearly drowning in the trenches, all for about a shilling a day—if we looked at things in their way—they'd think themselves lucky to have nice soft jobs at home at any price. Striking for more money! it's damnable. Kitchener will be taking them by the back of the neck and knocking a bit of sense into them if they play about much longer. And after this *Lusitania* business! I did think that would have stirred up their pluck. Here we are risking our lives every day and glad to do it, and there they are drinking and striking and stopping us from getting the shells we're waiting for! I reckon if they'd seen the sights I've seen to-day, fine young Highlanders gassed, and tearing at their throats, trying to breathe, and shouting to the nurses and doctors to shoot them and put them out of the misery these devils from hell have brought upon them—I reckon they'd still stop at home and drink and strike. I can't bear to think of it. And the Canadians, and New Zealanders, and Australians, and Indians, coming up like men to do their bit—leaving everything and risking everything as cheerful as larks! It won't stand looking at. I've not been a very good lad myself, as you know, sir, but I reckon I'm a sight better than those skulks at home. Why, I wouldn't come back till the job's done for the best place and the best money in England."

Nor do I think he would. As for his not having been a very good lad, that was true. Neither

had he been a very bad one. His father was entirely to blame for whatever faults he once had. Marrying at twenty-five years old, the father managed, partly by lying, partly by favouritism, to secure a situation such as he could never have looked to obtain by honest merit. He soon developed a dislike for his wife, whom he regarded as greatly his inferior. By the time the only child, Claude, was three years old the father and mother were separated, the husband making the wife a miserable allowance of fifteen shillings a week wherewith to support herself and her boy, and telling her that if she pressed for more he would leave the country and she would get nothing. So the poor frightened wife existed for five years with her son in a couple of humble rooms in the same city where her husband lolled with the woman who had supplanted her in a smart landau drawn by a pair of fine horses down a street which the discarded partner must use frequently. Under these conditions it is not strange that the wife took to drink, and that the spies whom her husband set to watch her movements were able to gather such evidence as to persuade the Court to grant the husband divorce by the time Claude reached his tenth year. The miserable allowance then ceased altogether. The wrong-doer triumphed. Had the wife been able to sue for divorce before the refinement of cruelty practised by her husband did its work, she would perhaps have been saved from shame and her boy's career changed.

As it was, she drifted a hundred miles away from that city and came here at last with a besotted creature who was content to exist on her shameful earnings, until the police put an end to his evil living by securing for him a term of imprisonment, after discharging which he left the place. The mother shortly afterwards entered the

workhouse to die. Claude, now fourteen years old, gained a wretched living by assisting a man he met with in a low quarter of the town in pushing a handcart in the collection of rags and bones.

Following an occupation of that sort, Claude was fortunate in escaping the grip of the law until he reached his eighteenth year. A quick succession of prosecutions for theft proved that he had grown light-fingered from the training his wretched occupation had afforded. I took him in hand. He was given employment as a labourer in a place where, as his master put it, "if there was anything not under lock and key worth taking he was welcome to take it." If he would work, the past should be forgiven. He did work, stimulated greatly by the fact that I had been fortunate enough to interest in him a woman placed very much as his own mother had been placed, but whose friends had stood by her when her husband fled the country with another woman. This excellent person, in return for such payment as his wages allowed him to make, provided him with a good home and mothered him in a fashion he never forgot. Her health broke down when he had been with her two years, and she was forced to take up her abode with friends who lived twenty miles away.

She had done her work with Claude so well, however, that he was a changed character by that time, and he had made such progress in his employment as to have induced his master to tell me that whensoever I had a similar youth for whom I desired a situation, he would take it as a favour if I would give him the first refusal of the youth's services. Claude could hardly have done better than that.

He chanced to meet at my rooms about this time a young soldier who had called for old ac-

quaintance sake, and whose fondness for the army communicated to Claude a laudable desire to serve the King. His master was not well pleased to hear that he had enlisted, but the fact that he received Claude back into his employment when his period of service expired may be set against that, especially as by the outbreak of the war the master had given him the best situation he had it in his power to bestow.

When Claude rejoined his regiment, although a sergeant, he stood to lose twenty-eight shillings a week, the difference between his pay in civil and military life. He was certainly entitled, like tens of thousands more, to pour scorn and contempt upon men who, not content to let others fight the great battle for the very existence of England without their aid, must needs hamper our sailors and soldiers by their criminal folly and selfishness.

I can but hope and pray that Claude and many another such-like lad of whom I have grown very fond—their youthful faults and failings notwithstanding, indeed all purged away in the fire that has tried the heroes and proved them pure gold—will be preserved in the heroic fight I know they will continue to fight manfully, to come safe back to receive the homage of the country their valour has saved.

That confidence in the power of the great Field-Marshal responsible for the land forces of our country, so tersely expressed by Claude, I have found to be generally shared among my friends. The young soldier who fired Claude with the ambition to become a soldier is perhaps the keenest Kitchener man I know. He went with the other reservists at the first blast of the call. I found from what he told me on departing that he thought the other Field-Marshal who was so

gloriously to command the expeditionary force in France and Belgium, and under whom he was delighted to serve, was to take supreme command out there. When I pointed out that he was going to fight on French territory, that infinitely the greater number of troops opposing the Germans would be Frenchmen, that the plan of campaign must necessarily be French, and the supreme direction of military operations there must consequently be in French hands, he appeared for a moment to be convinced. But after being still a minute he said very firmly, and in a somewhat aggrieved tone—

“Kitchener ought to go out then. There’d be no haggling about who was the gaffer if he went.”

He had completely missed my point, and it was hopeless to attempt to further explain. He was an uncommonly good soldier, but he had risen no higher than a private, just as since his relegation to the reserve he had got no further than brick-layer’s labourer. Nor did he seek promotion. There are men who are quite happy always in the lowest room, and he is one of them.

I first met him ten years ago badly needing discipline, since he had come to be twenty years old without ever finding a master for a single day after leaving school. He seemed to spend most of his time in a futile anxiety to strengthen a particularly stout wall by leaning against it. That was unremunerative employment enough, and naturally failed to produce even the price of his bed in a lodging-house. Hence he got into trouble for vagrancy, and I discovered that he was at sixteen years old the inheritor of a pony and dray, and gained a livelihood by removing bits of furniture and by acting as porter for small shopkeepers who required goods conveyed from the markets and auction-rooms. Death had

simultaneously put a period to the pony's usefulness and James's means of existence some few months before my introduction to the vagrant, and James had not the smallest notion of what he desired to do for the future.

If he had only another pony! But the dray had been sold. If he had another pony and dray! But who could be expected to provide these for a young fellow of twenty, well and strong, able to work and earn them for himself? A builder wanted a few navvies to excavate foundations, and I got James a start. James was not enamoured either of his work or his master, there being three sons of his employer who took upon themselves to watch their father's interests. So James relinquished his uncongenial task after eight days, and took the King's shilling.

I had no hand in the enlistment, but congratulated him whole-heartedly on the step he had taken, and expressed a hope that he would do well. He appeared to have no doubt about that.

"I shall be right enough," he said with great assurance — "there won't be so many gaffers knocking about there."

By what he told me afterwards from time to time I rather suspect that certain officers, commissioned and non-commissioned, corrected this mistaken impression for him before he had been in the army long. Still he never regretted the choice he had made, and from the outset took keen interest in military life, grumbling much when the day came for him to resume civil employment, as luck or my own caprice would have it, under the masters whose numbers had so vexed him for eight days in a bygone year well remembered by us all.

The situation offered this time was as brick-layer's labourer, as has been said. He settled down steadily now, and had the wit to choose a good

wife, with whom he had lived seven happy months when the parting came which we trust may soon end in his triumphant return. Meanwhile his employer's three sons are training in the new armies, hoping soon to lend a hand in the stern fight; and their father generously allows James's young wife the use of a cottage rent free until her husband returns to his waiting home and employment, and to the baby boy whom he has not yet seen.

This is how James in his crude, vigorous style describes events in Flanders:

"Master, it's hell out here: guns roaring and bullets flying, and airships dodging about dropping bombs, and gas let loose to poison you, and those damned Germans who dress up in our men's clothes slipping about to try and trick you everywhere, and snipers shooting at you from the Lord knows where. You've no idea what it's like. I keep getting a scratch on the face, or arm, or leg; but I've not happened ought serious enough to take me to the hospital all through yet, though I've been in the thick of it all along. I've had about a ton of muck on me a bit since—they've just digged me out—but when they expected to find me dead under the muck and stuff of the blown-up trench, I up and laughed at 'em. They were a bit mad, like, and they swore a bit. They thought I'd been playing a bit of a game with 'em; but I couldn't stir till they took a great tree-trunk off the top of me, and it's better to laugh than cry any time I say. We aren't doing so bad through it all—plenty of something to eat and drink, and grand officers who look after you every way they can. You'd be glad to die for 'em if it came to that. And Lord Kitchener's got together a wonderful lot of

fellows for his new armies: they're beginning to come by thousands; and we'll make these German beggars know what o'clock it is before very long. We reckon as Lord Kitchenner's got a pill for them that'll help us to move 'em a bit soon."

All seem to share James's high opinion of the officers. It is not strange, perhaps, that those who were least used to discipline when they joined the army should most admire those who have licked them into shape.

A quarrelsome youth who had piled up a remarkable record of convictions for minor offences, including two for drunkenness, before he was seventeen years old, struck me at the outset of his brief criminal career as being what he was entirely because he had always been allowed to have his own way. His parents were well-meaning but weak-minded people who bestowed a "You shouldn't do that, you know, Willie," upon their son when it would have been more to the point if they had bestowed a good birch rod. He was altogether out of their control by the time he was ten years old, but the schoolmaster into whose unsympathetic ears they poured their troubles, by the exercise of firmness and the occasional use of the cane, never had real difficulty with him. Neither had I when I finally got him to accept service with a farmer who understood human nature.

Willie went to the farm with a weakness for turning up his nose at fat bacon. The farmer considered a diet of dry bread washed down with weak tea to be an admirable corrective, and Willie came to show a marked fondness for fat bacon. He refused one day to take to the fields the packet of bread and cheese put up for him. Twelve hours'

abstinence caused him to relish that very fare when set before him instead of the more appetising meal which would otherwise have been served on his return. He refused one night to prepare beds for the cattle, and was surprised to find when he retired to rest that his own bed had been taken away, the hard straw mattress alone remaining. He called his master a liar once, and decided that he had been a fool when he picked himself up from the ground to which he was instantaneously felled.

Thus, although he concluded that he would feel more at home in the army than at the farm, he learned much during his twelve months' stay there. The ground had been prepared for the sowing. He adapted himself to the ways of the army better than he would have found possible without the help of those twelve months' probation. He surprised me by calling after about two years' time wearing the badge of rank as a corporal. When he became a reservist it was with the rank of sergeant. He made an excellent commissionaire for fifteen months after his return to civil life. Then the war came.

Writing after Mons he says:—

“If there's a grander man in the world than General Hubert de la P. Gough I'd like to see him. Sir, we've got the finest cavalry general that ever drew breath in that gentleman. Ah, he is a gentleman, he is! Then there's General Sir Philip Chetwode—he's another grand man. But there's plenty more wonderfully good men. We're praising them all along, and they deserve the best we can say or do. We're willing to follow them anywhere. There isn't a grumbler among the men that I can hear of.”

Again from the trenches in Flanders, he writes:—

‘General Sir Philip Chetwode has been in the trenches with us, working and slaving by

the hour like a navvy, and giving us his cigarettes till he hadn't one left for himself. We didn't notice it till we'd all got lit up. I offered him a Woodbine I happened to have, and he smoked that instead of one of his own good ones; and said he'd never enjoyed a whiff so much in his life."

The sergeant's pet aversion was drink. After the second conviction because of it he became a staunch teetotaller. After Louvain he wrote:—

"I would never have thought it possible for men to be such brutes as some of the Germans are. Not all: it is the drinkers who do such devilish deeds to women and girls, and old men and little children. I often thank God you made me a teetotaller. I should have wasted my time in the army else. But the worst drunkard in our army would never be a tenth part the brute some of these Germans are. All the same, get as many of the new men as you can to be teetotal. We reckon nothing to drinkers here."

A philanthropist now infirm from age, but whose whole life is one long record of good works, has been good enough to provide me with an excellent supply of sane Temperance booklets which I have found invaluable in attempting the work the sergeant so strongly urges me to do. Over a thousand of my men and lads on active service or in training pledged themselves with me to abstain from intoxicants for the duration of the war, most of them anticipating by months the illustrious example of their King and his famous War Minister.

One of the men who had caused me much labour in trying to persuade him to overcome a fondness for drink, which was his one failing, gave me one

of the greatest surprises of my life by keeping his pledge for a month under circumstances in which normally he would most assuredly have broken it half a dozen times over. Then he went to rejoin his regiment, was soon drafted to the front, and tells me in his letters that drink has no attraction for him now. He is too busy looking for chances to help in defeating the German enemy.

From the 5th of August he was wont to call on me once in every twenty-four hours to bemoan the fact that although men were wanted—five hundred thousand of them—there was he, an old soldier, only thirty-eight, and never more fit in his life, and they would not have him. He had been to this recruiting office and that, and had judiciously adjusted his age in endeavouring to please the officer in charge. But it was all to no purpose. His teeth were bad.

“I told the doctor, ‘I thought they wanted men to fight the Germans,’ he said to me, seriously enough, ‘we’re not going to eat ’em.’ But the doctor said he daren’t pass me with a rotten mouthful of pegs like mine.

“I can’t think why they want to make such a fuss about a fellow’s teeth. Mine have gone with me through the Soudan campaign, then through the South African War. Of course we hadn’t to eat any Arabs, or Boers either, so they were all right there. And now this job’s on they begin to twaddle about ’em as if I’d never done no soldiering and couldn’t rough it a bit because I’m not used to a tooth-brush, and my teeth are a bit yellow and black in places, like.”

I was greatly afraid that he would go off drinking again in attempting to find solace for many disappointing efforts to get a doctor to take a more satisfactory view of his case. I did the best I could for a month to aid him to over-

come the difficulty. At last a doctor was found willing to take the risk. Smith joined his regiment in high glee, and three weeks later he was in France.

He was, like many old soldiers, a great Buller man. There never was such a general as his hero. He used to wax eloquent over what he was pleased to regard as Buller's scurvy treatment after the South African war whenever he could get any one to listen to him. Eloquence induced thirst; liquor induced pugnacity. He paid eight visits to the Court in answer to summonses on charges of being drunk, and of creating disturbances while under the influence of drink.

He was by no means a bad fellow. Generous to a fault, he worked hard, drew good wages, and was always as poor as a crow, though a single man without dependants of any kind. He managed to keep a bed in a lodging-house. He had just a change of underclothing and the suit on his back; that was all. Honest and straightforward, he would, I am sure, never have signed the pledge unless he had fully meant to keep it. Yet he signed it eight times, and always broke it as soon as he got once more in his usual haunts and among his old companions. The one thing that proved strong enough to keep him from temptation was the overmastering desire to serve his country in its hour of need.

His experience of the campaign only began with the commencement of trench warfare. He had a poor opinion of that method of fighting, and wrote:—

"It's the rummest go you ever saw. Two sides dig sewers about five feet deep, and soon there's about two feet of water and mud to stand in. If you pop your head up, ten to one you're popped off. But you keep popping your head up so as to have a go at them.

I'm about 'sick of this way of fighting. Why can't we up and at 'em like old Buller would have done. We might as well lose men in rushing their sewers as lose 'em standing here, I say. But then I know nought about it; only I wish them doctors were here, that talked about my teeth being bad. There's nought so much wrong with me. They'd say so now. Here I am as fit as a fiddle after living like a water-rat off and on for three months; and young fellows with good teeth—passed right enough; not a word about 'em—holding their jaws with toothache and going off to hospital all along. But you can't wonder. In my opinion about three parts of our men will have to have all their teeth out, and then they'll be rheumaticy all their lives. Of course we're well fed and have plenty of warm clothes. No army could be better done to that way. It's just the soft way of fighting I complain about, that's all."

He was better pleased when the advance movement began.

"This is something like," he said, describing doings in the neighbourhood of Neuve Chapelle, "you would enjoy it, sir; it's just hell. Barbed wire entanglements, rattling good shots sniping all along, coal-scuttles and Black Marias flying about, and going on for all you're worth through it all. The young officers, as game as the old ones, leading you till they drop, and then lying on the ground and cheering you like blazes. And the blasted Germans flying yelling before cold steel—when they can fly. But there's nobody cares to let 'em fly if we can catch 'em after their goings on. We'll have 'em boiled when we get fairly going now.

"Only tell the gunmakers and the shell-

makers to bother with no more booze until we've done with this, but to stick to their end of the business like men till we've seen this thing through. And young fellows that aren't making shells or guns, tell 'em they're wanted out here behind a rifle and a fixed bayonet. Tell 'em to leave drink and betting and idling and striking till they've done their bit to settle this job. Then we'll all have a drink together."

Still later, he says:—

"Gas—we've given 'em gas! We were bringing in a lot of prisoners we'd taken, when they tried to rush us, thinking we were all poisoned. We'd left many a hundred of 'em dead, on the ground and in the trenches, and we were bringing this lot past where some of our poor fellows lay struggling for breath—such a sight as you never saw. It fairly went to one's heart. I cried like a child to see how they suffered. And if two of the spawn of hell we'd got didn't point at 'em gasping there, and laugh fit to split their sides, and say, in good English, mind, 'What you think of that?' as well as they could for laughing. I fetched both 'of 'em a sandcrack with the butt-end of my rifle on their skulls, and they laughed then on the other side of their faces. We had to carry 'em after that, and the doctors had a bit of extra trouble bringing 'em round. The major told me I didn't ought to have done it, and I suppose I didn't, for the doctors have enough to do without bothering with them beasts. If I see ought like that again, though, I shall be at 'em just the same, for I can't bear such goings on. Only I must try to manage so as no doctor will be bothered with 'em next

time. Not that the gas is going to do 'em any good in the long-run; we want more shells and more men. Nobody need be downhearted. It's a certainty that we're going to Berlin. I'll bring you a bit of a keepsake from there. You can depend on that, sir. For you're the best friend I've ever found."

Not a particularly creditable friend for me, those who knew him here in the days before the war might have thought. And some reading his letters in the original, before going through the toning down it seems best to submit them to, would say he is still a profane and wicked person upon whom my influence has wrought small benefit. Be it so. Yet I am glad I offered him my friendship, and proud that he values it. For, rough and uncouth of speech as he undoubtedly is, he is at heart a very great gentleman, true as steel, and the soul of honesty and integrity.

Unlike him in his method of expressing himself, but exactly similar in qualities that go to make a proper man, is my friend Edgar, a sergeant in Smith's regiment. He came to know me through his folly bringing him before the Bench when he was twenty years old. He thought his sweetheart had jilted him, and, careless what became of him, gave up his work and began to drink heavily. In his carousals he became acquainted with a gang of dangerous thieves who made a tool of him. He was fortunately pulled up early by the police, and narrowly escaped a severe sentence for being found in possession of stolen goods. That frightened him into realisation of the perilous course he had drifted on. He thankfully

accepted the help I offered to enable him to make a fresh start, and in two years entirely convinced me that I was right when I judged him to have blundered into crime though possessing not at all a criminal mind.

He sprang from a soldier family. His father had served in the Ashanti and Zulu wars, and swore by Lord Wolseley. His aged grandfather was a Crimean and Indian Mutiny veteran who told me many stories of what men were in the days before England ceased to breed men. His great-grandfather fell at Waterloo. He had himself tried to enlist as a drummer-boy during the Boer war, but was told that no vacancies existed.

For two years and a half he alternated between hope and despair of winning back his lost love. Despair triumphed. He found refuge in the army. Then the fickle maid discovered that she loved him, and him alone. After a long courtship they were married, though army regulations forced them to live apart except when he had short periods of furlough.

Coming back to civil life, he found that his capable wife, notwithstanding the care of the four children they were now blessed with, had by her labour so added to the means he had provided as to furnish a most cosy little home. He told me often how he admired her for that. Until his return she had lived with her parents—who rather patronised him on his short visits to the house—and he had looked forward to staying there for an extended period with some dismay. It is characteristic of this splendid woman that she showed the insight to observe the undesirability of her husband feeling ill at ease, and the resource which obviated that by providing an independent home.

When Edgar came to acquaint me with the

fact that he was recalled to the Colours, his wife accompanied him. With that contradiction of disposition she had shown before then she told me—

“It’s a shame he has to go after only being at home eight months, and when he was getting on so well at his work and we were doing so nicely. Why can’t they make some of the idle skulks go that won’t work and are no good to anybody? But never mind: they’ve sent for him and he’ll go happy enough. He ought to go: I know that; but I hate to part with him.”

I chanced to be in the railway station when he left. He kissed the children—bright, bonny little things, rising one above another like steps—before he entered a compartment. As the train was about to steam out the mother lifted the children to the window for a final caress. Then after kissing him herself she said with a laughing face—

“Now you’re not to bother about us at home. We shall be all right; and there’ll be another little face for you to kiss when you come back. We shall have better doings than you; but you must think of us working to keep things right here while you’re away. We shan’t be idle. We’ll have a nicer house for you to come back to than ever.”

And the noble woman kept a smiling face, and the children were merry, feeling that nothing could be wrong with mother so happy. The train steamed away. Handkerchiefs ceased to wave farewell. The mother turned to go home with her little ones.

“Mother,” I overheard one enquire, “what was amiss with father? He was crying when the train went.”

“Crying!” another small voice echoed indigantly: “fancy, mother, he says father was

crying. Happen he'd got a bit of dust in his eye."

There is frequently a little dust in the air when a train is in motion. The children's mother suddenly felt herself affected as the father had been; and to prove that it must have been the dust, several of us who waited there and looked on found occasion to apply handkerchiefs to the corners of our own eyes, as the children, blissfully unconscious of what that parting meant, trooped merrily off with chocolate somebody extracted for them from a convenient automatic machine on the platform there.

Here is an extract from a letter Edgar wrote to his wife from the north of France. He describes the death of a man of his company; then he says:—

"I wish you'd go and see the poor lad's mother. She wrote him such beautiful letters. She said she was sure God would bring him safe back because she was praying night and day for him. Tell her that God knew what was best. It would never have done for him to come back as he was. And tell her, Edith, he died very happy. He said to me, as I tried to make him comfortable on the grass, 'It's all right, Sergeant, I'm going, I know; and I'm not a bit afraid. I've always done my duty best way I could; and now I'm going to say my prayers.' He was gone a minute later. I just caught 'Our Father which art in heaven' before he went. I fancy he saw Him waiting at the door for him, poor lad."

And who shall say the sergeant's fancy was wrong?

Many a letter that he sent speaks eloquently of risks run without a thought of self, only for

the sake of helping others, friend and foe alike, in their hour of distress. Edgar is numbered among the thousands who in our armies of heroes deserve the Victoria Cross for countless glorious deeds gloriously done.

And in a spotlessly clean, beautiful little home there wait for him five sweet little things, wanting naught save his presence, and a wife of a sort for whom there should certainly be an order for valour—one whose own conduct bears comparison with the splendour of her husband's conduct in that terrible but glorious field.

III.

ON FLEET SUPPLY BOATS.

WHAT strange experiences will be related to children's children by many of our countrymen whose humdrum lives until the coming of the great war seemed to contain not the least possibility of romance: what tales of cool courage shown by land and sea! Stirring stories lie before me of ships running without lights in thick fog or pitchy darkness through mine-strewn seas, every beacon withdrawn from a treacherous coastline: of sailors looking out with sharp eyes and brain alert to frustrate a cunning foe and avoid a hundred dangers: of brave hearts leaning on the "Hitherto the Lord hath helped us," and the "The Lord hath been mindful of us and He shall bless us," and giving thanks that conditions are against submarine attack. I read again of ships steaming at bright noonday or in clear moonlight, every outline of the coast plainly visible: the ships also visible to lurking pirates seeking to murder and destroy; and of resolute seamen determined to play the man to the end,—grateful to the bottom of their hearts for mine and fog and darkness swept away. It is difficult for a landsman to realise the simple faith and lofty courage shown by our countrymen on every sea. Danger does but multiply the seaman's virtues and

infect common folk of his company with his heroic courage.

No doubt the great bulk of the men of our mercantile marine have been schooled from boyhood in their calling, and are of ripe experience, with courage proved time and again in many a perilous scene. They rose to meet new terrors as became men of their breed; they fought new foes careless of personal danger, determined only to do their duty as best they could, and they won the success uniformly won by British seamen since the day their forefathers gave to Britain the sceptre of the seas and taught her sons their most honourable trade. We shall miss a striking point concerning their recent deeds, however, if we forget that they have among them men and lads who have not been schooled in that exacting profession,—men and lads whom their own example in the hour of testing made into heroes or else cowards. And where has been the coward? Where, among all the thousands of landsmen shipped as stokers, trimmers, checkers, and what not, is he to be found whom the bearing of these gallant seamen has not inspired with something of its own indomitable pluck and resource? What shall we say, too, of natures capable of the creditable response these landsmen have made to the call for an exhibition of high courage under conditions from which experienced seamen might have blenched and been forgiven? The decadence of Britain was the nightmare of some of us not long ago. In the full blaze of day, and with the vigour of the body politic renewed by exertions calling into play its last fibre, we see that all is well.

It is not my privilege to know anything worth recording of the paladins of our mercantile marine; my acquaintance are among the lesser heroes serving under them, and whose occasional letters exhibit all that lofty admiration becoming

to pages of these worthy knights. They picture no courtly dress, no cavalier manner, nothing of knight-errantry at all. They describe simply and ingenuously the admiration they have for men whom they regard it as high honour to serve.

"Our captain," says one of my friends, "is the finest man I ever saw. He's never - frightened at anything. We had three days' fog, and he never left the bridge for over seventy hours. When the fog cleared he let the mate relieve him and went to the cabin as if he'd done nothing to be talked about. I thought then, you'll never catch me grumbling any more: here's the captain out there all that time, and everybody feeling safe and going on as usual just because he is there, and he never says a word when it's over, where many a man would talk about striking for double pay before he tackled a job like that again. All we heard him say was at prayers, when he thanked God that the fog had kept the German submarines he knew were about from giving us any trouble. I wouldn't leave this ship for any money while the captain stops, and I shall ask him to take me with him when he gets a better boat, as he's sure to do before long."

That is my friend's testimonial. I know nothing more of his hero. I am content with the tribute: grateful to know of one more gallant English gentleman who has brought out the best that was in one more of the victims of our social ills.

As for the writer of the letter, Tom was the son of parents who had no conception whatever of the benefits of discipline. Allowed to do as he pleased; given money whensoever he cared to torment his father or mother long enough to achieve his object; going out and coming in at his own sweet will even while still a child at

school ; spoiled, petted, admired as a genius when he was in reality only playing the fool, he grew up with a supreme contempt for his parents, and laughed at the warnings his misconduct induced them from time to time to offer.

No more industrious workman than Tom's father ever lived, and none more highly valued by a master. Everybody who knew him at his work recognised his all-round ability and integrity. No neater or more attractive home could be found than Tom's mother kept. Her willingness to do a neighbourly kindness, also, had been experienced by many. The parents' one great fault was that they proved themselves incapable of rightly training a boy. Otherwise they were quite estimable folk. They were pillars of a chapel in the artisan neighbourhood in which they resided, and were much grieved when their lad ceased to attend its Sunday-school and services. Every one of their six daughters had grown up into the good and capable woman she always promised to become. Tom, youngest child and only son, was the failure of the family.

The full depth of the tragedy of his mistraining was not revealed until after his father died. By that time Tom had occupied for seven years a situation given him because he was his father's son. He was twenty-one years old. In his own estimation he was a mighty fine fellow : in the estimation of his fellow-workmen, a lanky, unprepossessing hobbledohoy who had wasted splendid opportunities of learning a useful trade, and whose self-conceit was ludicrous. He had traded on the fact that his employer had a high regard for his father, and had made no effort to win appreciation on his own merits.

It pleased him to regard himself as master of his mother's house after his father's death, taking upon himself to dispose of several articles of

furniture to satisfy his ever-increasing need for pocket-money. His mother complained, and he had several sharp altercations with his sisters. To prove his domination he called a broker into the house and requested a bid for its entire contents. Then even his mother's crushed spirit asserted itself. She produced a will drawn up by her husband to secure for herself all the little property the couple had acquired during their married life. Tom was furious. The broker had to intervene to prevent him doing his mother serious bodily harm in his madness, and, in the end, to throw him into the street, where he collected stones and broke practically every window-pane, besides kicking out two panels of the door of the house. A constable coming in sight, Tom made a series of wild threats which greatly terrified his mother and sisters, then wisely cleared off.

It would have been well for them had he never returned. They had not the experience to regard the matter in that light, however. When he turned up again after a week's absence both from home and work he was received with open arms, to assume the attitude that what had taken place was due far more to their wrong-doing than his own.

He was allowed to resume work, and, sullen and masterful, soon showed that his week's wanderings had taught him nothing. His conduct at home grew insufferable. Without the least provocation he would give the reins to his foolish and selfish temper. At last he struck his mother a violent blow in the face because, as he alleged, his linen had not been ironed to his liking.

That brought a person on the scene who had long itched to take a hand in the affair. Tom's eldest sister was married to a man of good sense, who could see nothing but misery lying before the family until the idiot was severely dealt with.

Hearing what had been done to his mother-in-law, he came to the house, found Tom, took him into the back-yard, soundly thrashed him, and with a promise of sterner treatment should he at any time discover him within a hundred yards of the place, kicked him over a low wall which separated the yard from a river.

Tom's sisters of course shrieked as they beheld this conclusion, but their brother took no harm from his involuntary plunge, and the excellence of the treatment for the purpose in view was proved by the fact that to this day Tom has never ventured home again, though he is sure of a welcome now.

Failing to present himself at his place of work on the day succeeding his immersion, his name was taken off the list of the firm's employees. He had tired out his masters by his careless and indolent workmanship, while his hopeless incompetence and extravagant self-conceit made him the laughing-stock of fellow-workmen, among whom his sullen disposition also rendered him unpopular.

There is no more helpless being in the world than a lazy unemployed workman useless at his trade and conscious of his uselessness. When he has altogether wearied out his friends he easily and naturally becomes an abject not ashamed to beg from any chance acquaintance of better days, sounding a lower depth of degradation than is reached by the beggar who seeks alms of strangers. Tom existed on grudgingly given help thus acquired for the summer months following his dismissal. The winter found him placed in the dock at the Police Court on a charge of vagrancy. He had spent several nights in a brick-kiln, had come near to being suffocated while he slept, and, badly burnt and in rags, presented a pitiable spectacle. On promising to go to the workhouse, he

was discharged. Finding that he was expected to labour there, his stay in the workhouse was brief. He persuaded a visitor that he would gladly work outside if a chance were given him. The chance was provided by his old employer, who rather wished than hoped that Tom was really anxious to amend his ways. His former fellow-workmen received him back most generously; one provided him with a suit of clothing so good that he had hesitated to take it as a working suit for himself until it reached a more shabby stage; another presented him with a very serviceable pair of boots, and the rest contributed among them the cost of a week's board and lodgings, unfortunately being unwise enough to hand over the money to him instead of to the woman who took him into her home. At the end of the week he departed without warning. When he went he was wearing the boots and clothing that had been given him. He had omitted to give the landlady the lodging-money subscribed, and also to pay her any of the sum he had drawn for his week's wages.

He wandered up and down the country for a while until he was once more brought before the Bench on the old charge, and looking the part of vagrant to perfection. The magistrates again referred him to the workhouse. In a fortnight the workhouse officials referred him back to the magistrates. For refusing to perform the task allotted under the Poor Law he went where it was useless to resist the hard labour provided for him. Prison treatment did him no good. He seemed to rather like it, judging by the number of times he went there during the next three years. But a day came at last when he woke up to a realisation of the folly of his way of going on. He had to pay the usual penalty of long-continued shiftlessness and idleness. Nobody would believe that he wanted to do better. That broke him

down completely. He heard from me for the tenth or eleventh time in succession that I had no faith in him, and bursting into tears pleaded for a chance so effectively that I changed my mind and yielded.

A hard-working man required some one to assist him for a few months on a piece of heavy labour. Tom went and tackled the job. It proved the means of pulling him together. Under the constant personal supervision of a master who would stand no nonsense; who had no hesitation in applying a rod to the back of any fool who seemed to need that correction; who both by teaching and living set forth his strong abhorrence of idleness; and whose extremely practical creed was summed up in the short word, duty, Tom settled down to steady labour, obtained decent clothing, and actually started making his mother a small weekly allowance besides putting a little money in the bank. His master extended the promised period of employment, and Tom was doing quite well when, the war breaking out, he conceived it to be his duty, as he told me, "to go and do his bit in the army." He enlisted, but was soon discharged as unfit for military service owing to injury to his toes caused by burnings received in his sleep in sundry brick-kilns and coke-ovens during his wanderings: he was, in fact, unable to walk far without showing signs of grave lameness, while otherwise strong and sound enough.

The master who had effected his reformation, by this time employed on a Government contract, would have taken him back willingly, and I had now enough confidence in him to secure employment for him in one of the armament works, but he was bent upon serving his country in more active fashion. Knowing others who, although similarly inexperienced, had obtained berths at sea, he begged me to get him on a ship in any

capacity, and to his joy he was given a start as a trimmer in a boat carrying stores to the Fleet. He found a skipper who continued the excellent discipline that had already worked wonders for him. After a month's experience of his new calling he wrote:—

“I shall never forget this first four weeks; I was that sea-sick, and I had to work that hard. Then there are the mines which might blow us up any time, but we're getting used to them now. But if anybody thinks there's no work to do at sea he's making a big mistake, especially if he's soft enough to come and have a try while he thinks like that. It's a good job my last master taught me what to expect, and how to face it like a man; for our captain won't allow any idling about; and he's a good man, and I feel all the happier for doing something that's useful for England.”

Tom's more recent letter already given, and one still later written to his mother when sending along an instalment of her allowance, now doubled, and regularly paid, testify to the fact that he has become a worthy citizen after all. It may be asked, how can anybody except himself, and possibly his parents, be blamed for the sad waste of his earlier years? Granted that he was himself chiefly, and his parents secondarily, responsible, it still seems to me that he might have been saved his miserable experience had others done what they might have done. I have already stated that Tom's parents were pillars of a certain humble church, and that they were much distressed when, at fifteen years old, he ceased to attend its services. Yet so far as I can tell no persistent effort to win him back was made by any one except his parents. I have heard vaguely of some well-meaning person “talking like a father to him and praying with him,” seeking to induce him to eschew his evil

courses. When Tom ridiculed that treatment, ineffacious because as "pearls cast before swine" no doubt, but still more because it set forth but one side of the truth, he was given up in despair, save for a pious hope that he would be changed sometime, somehow. But no strong-minded man of good sense set before the lad in his earlier years the fact that he was playing the fool; and none, at least in a way that carried certain promise of performance, threatened drastic punishment unless he altered his ways. He had been allowed by his teachers to grow up expecting many privileges, but knowing nothing of duty. His fellow-workmen, too, would have rendered him a service had they cuffed him soundly for his frequent impertinences instead of laughing at his folly. But that would not have fitted in with the spirit of the age. It was held more merciful to allow him for lack of correction to drift perilously near to ruin, than to administer the chastisement which would have warned him from dangerous courses. Fortunately the proper medicine for his case was found at last; Britain has in him a useful son as a consequence, and the admiration always paid to their benefactors by those warned or rescued from evil and taught to do well is paid by Tom to quite other persons than might have been the case.

Very different was the home life of another lad whose letters lie before me. His mother's temperament was the most variable I ever experienced except in a drunkard; and she was a rigid abstainer. Her first husband died when the lad was a baby, and probably the second husband came near the truth when he suggested that his predecessor in the wife's affection "must have been right glad to die." Although a delicate man, the second husband contrived to earn a tolerable

income as a bootmaker. There were no children of the second marriage, and the stepfather poured out in a silent way the fulness of a loving heart upon his wife's boy. The mother busied herself in soliciting orders for her husband's business, delivered a large portion of the work when completed, and still found time to keep her home neat and clean. She worshipped herself because of her industry, never tired of extolling her own virtues, and encouraged herself in ambitious dreams of prosperity when her boy Bernard, having got free from the trammels of school, should learn his father's trade and make it possible to discharge the extra orders which she could easily obtain, but which at that time for lack of craftsmen could not be filled. It may be remarked that no boy could be got to entertain the idea of apprenticeship after a week's trial, and no workman would stay beyond that period in the husband's employment. Not that any one blamed him; on the contrary, he was given a good name by all. "It's his wife: she's continually nattering," was the general explanation.

Bernard meanwhile experienced the full misery of his mother's peculiar disposition. Sometimes he was treated as the paragon of virtue one would naturally look for in the son of so faultless a mother. More frequently he was exhibited as a striking example of the impossibility of guaranteeing that the excellent qualities of any breed will necessarily be transmitted from a mother to her offspring. He had none of her tidiness; the place "was everlastingly littered up" when he was about; he was too much like his father, "he wouldn't have work," whereas she herself could not live without it; he was never clean; what she would make of him she did not know: all this because he was an ordinary boy, with an ordinary boy's ways. Her husband put in a word

on the lad's behalf from time to time, but his interference only increased the trouble. "She rattles on," the poor man told me once, "like a stone in a tin can. It's 'Don't touch this,' 'Put that down,' 'Get out of my road,' 'Go and get washed at once,' 'There you are, reading again,' 'It's about time you came in; you're always out; why can't you get a book and stay in the house like other lads?' until the boy doesn't know what to do to be right. Then again, when the moon changes, it's 'He'll make a good lad yet,' 'Aye, bless him! he's his mother's own.' And it's no use me saying aught. I can only be still, and let her carry on."

The natural result of such mistraining was that by the time the lad reached fourteen years old he had ceased to pay the least attention to anything his mother said, and had come to regard his stepfather's will as of no consequence at all. The mother's dream of an extended business was shattered by the boy's determination to have nothing to do with it. When she returned one day from soliciting orders, instead of patiently endeavouring to learn the trade, as she had left him six hours' earlier, she found him gone off to play, "sick of such a rotten job," as his stepfather reported. He came in to tea a while later and listened to a severe lecture while he partook of the meal. The lecture had no effect. He went out again sullenly to resume his play. Not having returned at nine o'clock, his mother decided to teach him a lesson. To her husband's astonishment she insisted that they should go to bed leaving him out all night. At one o'clock next morning they were made by the police to get up and take the shivering lad in. He was sentenced by his mother to close confinement in his bedroom for four days following. Then he was told to resume his attempts at learning the trade. He made no

progress. After a fortnight he ran away from home. During the first half of his absence his mother was perpetually declaring that she never wished to see him again; that she hoped he would never return. She consulted the police, indeed, to ascertain whether she was bound to take him in if he did come back, and vowed that in any event he should have no further opportunity of achieving that fortune she had once planned for him. It came to her knowledge presently that he had wandered away to a country village and had told a romantic story to a farmer, who had provided him with a home and employment in which he was most comfortable. Nothing would do now but to get him away. She wrote letter after letter to him, visited him twice a week, quite unsettled him, and finally bore him back home in triumph to declare to her neighbours that absence from her side had taught him the value of his mother, and that she was now confident he would be "a different lad."

She no longer insisted that he should be a boot-maker. Since he would not have the work she chose, she decided that he must choose employment for himself. He found a blind alley occupation, and worked hard for two months for miserable pay, while his mother pointed out continually how that came of knowing better than she did what was good for him, and marvelled that he could be so foolish as to put up with such a contemptible situation. When he resigned the post, she changed her tune, and warned him that he must either secure reinstatement or find another place. And so the miserable business went on until he had been in sixteen different situations by the time he was seventeen years old, having learned nothing useful, his earnings never having exceeded eight shillings a week. Out of work for a fortnight, and not appearing

to trouble about getting further employment, a windbag who could be trusted was called in to remonstrate with him, and to point out how different a son such a mother as his own deserved. That did no good. He was brought to me in a fit of despair. Since he was bound to come into my hands sooner or later, his mother told me I might as well take him over then. I suggested the sea; the boy's eyes sparkled; but his mother said he was much too great a coward to make a sailor; he would promise to go, but I should never get him off.

I had no idea how truthfully she spoke. She took particularly good care that I did not get him off for eight months longer. It mattered not when I called at the house, I could never see him; he was said to be doing better. Meanwhile he secured two situations, each of which offered some promise, but his mother made such persistent and extraordinary enquiries of his employers as to render them suspicious of the lad's honesty, and he was dismissed. As a matter of fact the lad had taken a few coppers, the property of his mother, on several occasions when her tongue had temporarily driven him from home, and, perhaps, to her mind he was a thief whom she feared would bring disgrace upon her by his pilferings. It is only charitable to suppose that such a fear was responsible for the prosecution of the boy by herself a little later on a charge of stealing five shillings from her purse. Really the lad had determined to run away to sea, and had taken the money as a means of reaching the coast, hoping to repay it out of his earnings in due course. The magistrates soon saw how matters stood. To the stepfather's credit be it said that he spoke up for the lad, expressing the opinion that he would do well at sea. Bernard was handed over to my care. A ship was found for

him, notwithstanding that the mother still ridiculed the possibility of his being persuaded to go.

Finding that he was really going, she set to work to hurriedly attempt to break down the barrier her own hands had raised between herself and her son. It plainly stung her to the quick to see that he felt the coming parting from his stepfather, but was indifferent to the prospect of leaving her. She lavished gifts upon him. No lad ever went aboard ship to occupy the sort of position he went to fill with a better outfit than Bernard's mother provided for him. Yet when the moment of parting came, he went from her with the utmost calmness. It was in saying good-bye to his stepfather that the lad broke down.

He made a splendid sailor. When the great day of testing came for Britain he had been three years at sea, earning an excellent character, and never being accused of the least serious fault. Time and absence renewed his natural affection for his mother at last. The meetings and partings of mother and son at holiday-times grew to be what such meetings and partings should be. To-day the mother brought me a letter he had written to her from which I extract this:—

“You’ve no need to worry, mother. We’re not in half as much danger as you think. It’s a thoroughly jolly life. The sun shines beautifully, and the sea is as calm as a pond. If it wasn’t for looking out for submarines we should have nothing to do, and you know I never liked doing nothing, so I am all right. It was as dark as pitch last night, and we were not very sure that we were not among mines. So to-day we are all feeling very thankful for being brought safe so far, and not troubling about dangers a bit. Some of us would like to have a chance of ramming

one of the beggars; that's how we feel about the pirate craft. You at home are always thinking about us. Well, that's all right: and we are always thinking about you. But we're in no danger. You are; and we're out here to feed the warships with supplies, so that the Germans may be stopped from reaching you."

Certain sentences follow, very precious to the mother, but of no special concern to the general reader. They serve to show that his love for her is strong now. I let her read two letters he had lately sent me. One contained the following:—

"Nobody gets more things sent to him than I do. My mother never seems to know when she has done enough. I wish you would tell her that I have more than I shall want for many a long day."

From the other I extract this:—

"The captain told me I'd done a brave thing, and it was nice to hear him say that. But then if one fellow can swim and another can't, and the fellow that can swim sees the fellow drowning that can't, what can he do but jump in the water and give a hand?"

The mother's words for once were few. "I'm sorry I didn't understand the lad," she said; "and I'm thankful you got him to sea; but if anything should happen to him it will kill me." And I believe it would.

What a pity it is that of all the neighbours, all the customers at the shop, all who ministered or worshipped at the church they attended, none was found to seriously grapple with the problem of the lad's mistraining! The mother's constitutional unfitness to discharge the most important duty of moulding the character of her son must have been apparent to many. Is it not time that a response worthy of reasonable Christian folk were

made to the ancient query, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

That not uncommon type of man who has utterly forgotten his own boyhood days is frequently responsible for much mischief. About six years ago a lad fell into the hands of an unusually stupid police officer, who thought he had secured a juvenile burglar when he had merely caught a boy at play. The lad had been reading literature such as boys delight in, and, illicitly borrowing a revolver, dagger, and chisel, belonging to his father, had set out to emulate the deeds of the hero whose career had excited his admiration. He had four fellow-conspirators, all like him, about sixteen years old. Their plot was to lie in wait for a wicked old pirate and force him to disgorge his ill-gotten treasure, stored in a cave. The wicked old pirate was a particularly peaceful draper who had scarcely reached the middle age, the treasure his stock-in-trade, the cave his unpretentious shop to which was attached a particularly dark back-yard protected by a high wall. The night was cold. The pirate inconveniently delayed his arrival in the yard which represented the cave's entrance: had he appeared he would have been perfectly safe. The accomplices grew tired of sitting on the captured defences (called by most folk the wall) of the stronghold, and departed to their homes, leaving the arch-conspirator to carry out the plot alone. He remained for two minutes longer, then decided to abandon the quest for the night. He was ready to jump from the wall when he was unlucky enough to drop his chisel, and must needs descend into the yard to regain its possession. The wary constable's attention was attracted by the sound of falling steel. Scenting burglars, he laboriously ascended

the wall, shone a light into the yard, and discovered the criminal, whom he at once placed under arrest, and bore off to the police station in triumph.

It is unfortunately true that a run of ill-luck sometimes overtakes a mortal. That truth was strikingly demonstrated here. The most stupid sergeant of the force chanced to be on duty when its most stupid constable appeared at the office with his captive. The lad was solemnly searched, and the tremendous importance of his arrest was demonstrated by the evil nature of the implements found on his person, and in the yard of the property he had burglariously invaded. The chisel was plain proof of his determination to force an entrance to the premises; the lethal weapons glaringly exhibited his readiness to kill any one attempting to frustrate his criminal design. He was gravely charged that on that fearful night he did maliciously and burglariously enter enclosed premises with intent to commit a felony, having at the time in his possession certain deadly weapons, to wit a revolver and a dagger. His intelligent father, an engineer in a small way of business on his own account, hurriedly summoned to the charge office, took it into his head to regard the boy's freak as a crime, and, acting upon a strong hint dropped by the officers, allowed him to remain in a cell for the night.

The lad appeared in the dock next morning, a fine-looking, ruddy-complexioned youth, tall and well-made. His face gave evidence of recent tears, but it was plain to any person with an elementary knowledge of boy nature that he was feeling puzzled and frightened rather than ashamed and penitent. Ill-luck continued to dog the poor lad's steps. The Bench consisted of two childless magistrates, who sympathised so little with the exuberant spirit of youth as to suggest that in

certain far-off days they had been exhibited under glass shades as models of juvenile propriety. And an admirable magistrates' clerk, who could usually be depended on to keep an erratic Bench right, besides being only slowly recovering from the morbid effects of a recent attack of influenza, chanced to have fallen that very morning on a slide made by mischievous boys outside his gate. The ponderous charge, the incriminating evidence, the stupid officers, the unsympathetic Bench, the temporary mental and physical ills of the clerk, the idiotic inability of the father to understand his own son, aided by great ill-luck, combined to effect the astounding decision to sustain the charge and to refer it to a higher court capable, as the petty court was not, of dealing with so heinous an offence.

The melancholy satisfaction of breaking the chain of ill-fortune was left to myself. With some difficulty I persuaded the father to ignore the advice of certain wisecracks that it would do the lad good to go to prison until Quarter Sessions opened; and, not without hesitation, he bailed his son out. I was then at great pains to instruct the father in the difference between pranks and crimes; but either I taught him very ill, or else he learned his lesson very badly, since at Quarter Sessions he showed me a sort of petition he had drawn up to present to the Chairman, begging for mercy for his misguided boy. I was startled into begging the father not to make an utter fool of himself, but to keep his precious composition in his pocket until he got home, and then to quietly burn it.

The Grand Jury found a true bill, but the Chairman, having read the depositions, very properly refused to accept the lad's whispered plea of "guilty," made quite contrary to my own advice. He suggested to Counsel that the case might be

taken very shortly, and all was soon over; the jury found a verdict of "not guilty"; the Court voiced a dignified protest against such a case having been brought forward, and the lad was discharged with a few kindly words of advice from the Chairman, whom certain folk remembered as having once been a particularly lively boy himself.

In spite of this, the lad's father continued to be haunted by the feeling that his son had committed a grave crime, and conceived the notion that he must be taught to realise his wickedness by being sent away from home. It was sought to enlist him in the navy, but his teeth were bad. Then he was brought to me in the hope that I would ship him in the mercantile marine. I refused to do anything of the sort—as a punishment. The lad had received unjust punishment enough already. I would be no party to driving him away possessed of a serious grievance against those who sent him off. He must go, if at all, quite understanding that the raid on the pirate's cave was estimated at its proper value, and that no more need be said about it. Certainly it must have no connection with his going away. That must be of his own free will entirely. Accordingly the boy continued in his father's workshop for a time, and the trouble blew over.

After about twelve months the lad sought me out and told me that he liked engineering, and had no special fancy for any other trade; still he hankered after adventure, and thought he might find what would exactly suit him could he get into the engine-room of a ship. It was not difficult after this to arrange matters to everybody's satisfaction. Cyril was soon at sea, taking to the water as naturally as a duck, and giving his mind to his new profession with such thoroughness that a certain little steamer has been running

on dangerous missions under his skilful control of the engines ever since the enemy threatened our coasts.

He discourses a good deal in highly technical terms about various anxieties his charges cause him; they seem to be worn, and the engineers in the shipyards not being able to give them immediate attention, Cyril appears to have a lot of coaxing and patching to do to keep them in working mood. Nothing else troubles him. If the enemy could see his letters it would be possibly a revelation to discover how little some people are impressed by the policy of frightfulness.

"A submarine popped up in front of us yesterday," he says in a recent letter; "we put on full steam and went for the beggar. You should have seen it dive! We were quite disappointed at its not having a go at us. Of course we knew it could never catch us up once it had let us run over it. Our engines are getting to be crocks, but they're good to beat any submarine yet, though we have to be always tinkering at them. We are all in the pink of condition and as happy as sand boys."

It is refreshing to be able to state that Cyril's father is at last convinced that his son is not the abandoned villain he was once made out to be. I am sure of that, although the good man has not got quite to the point of confessing it. At present he will go no further than "perhaps we were too hard on him." It will not be long before he drops the perhaps. Meanwhile the "we" is not bad.

The still more foolish parent whom no evidence will convince that it is possible for his child to err is a great nuisance, and he exists even in circles where one would look for intelligence and good judgment. Of course it is quite possible for a

police officer to conceive a grudge against an in-offensive boy, to hunt him hither and thither until he makes the lad's life a burden, and finally to pounce upon him when he is engaged in an innocent game of marbles, and swear he is playing pitch and toss. It is further possible for such an officer to induce a brother constable to commit perjury in inventing a corroboration, not having himself been near the scene at all. Also such a wretch may well bribe little children to make false statements to bolster up a bad case. It is possible ; but it is not likely. To secure the conviction of a boy on such a paltry charge would hardly be worth while. Yet people are to be found who imagine that police officers are in the habit of doing this sort of thing "to get stripes." They had rather believe the very worst of others than admit the possibility of their own children straying a hair's-breadth from the right way.

A quite ordinary lad, whom no one could mistake for an angel even though his name did chance to be Gabriel, was among a batch brought before the Bench seven years ago on just that paltry charge mentioned ; a charge which, by the way, I personally have always felt to be foolish so long as older people are allowed to perpetually teach the young by their example that gambling is rather a manly and sportsmanlike pastime. It is a pity that some better means cannot be discovered for checking the assembling of young persons in quiet neighbourhoods to spoil the peace by the noisy and often profane quarrels arising out of small gambling transactions which they seem specially to arrange for Sunday afternoons. Complaints being received by the police that these games are taking place in certain quarters, there is no remedy save to track the offenders down and summon them to appear before the magistrates, who, the offences being proved, usually find the

justice of the case to be met by ordering the payment of a small fine, in many Courts three shillings and sixpence including costs. The offenders are not so easily tracked down as might be supposed, however; it is seldom wise on the part of magistrates to give too much credence to the common plea, "I never played before." Scouts are frequently employed by these gangs of lads to give warning of the approach of police. The scouts do their duty uncommonly well. Hence it is true that much hunting of boys hither and thither is unwillingly done by the police to such little purpose as to make official life a burden. And the boy very unlike an angel had given as much trouble as most, was certainly guilty of the offence he was charged with, and could scarcely claim that the fine he was ordered to pay amounted to the cost of replacing good leather worn from the boot-soles of two excellent officers whom he had led a pretty chase.

But the lad's father was furious. He was positively convinced that all the evidence offered against his son was false. That two officers had sworn to actually catching the boy red-handed; that three children had corroborated their testimony; and that none of the other five lads charged with him would deny the truth of what was alleged—all went for nothing. Everybody had lied; the officers were perjurers; the magistrates were fools—that was what the oracle told me when I called at his house seeking to induce his lad to spend his Sunday afternoons better—nobody knew the boy as he knew him; and he simply could not commit the offence it was said he had committed. I was told all this nonsense in the lad's presence. There was nothing to reply, save to suggest a prosecution for perjury; and then the lunatic took it into his head that I was taking sides with the police, and, telling me the fine had been paid and he would allow no further

reference to the matter, he allowed me to see that I had overstayed my welcome.

When after a very brief interval Gabriel was brought up again on a precisely similar charge, the father protested in court that his boy was being victimised by the police. It was a busy morning; no one had leisure to devote to his complaint, seeing that the case was clear; he had to pay an increased fine, and departed grumbling that all the law was for the police. He kept up this insane way of looking at things until the lad had piled up a record of seventeen convictions by the time he was eighteen years old—seventeen convictions for trifling offences, that is, in four years. I verily believe that had the police allowed him, the father would have taken the record, put it in a frame, and placed it on exhibition as convincing proof of his son's persecution. Meanwhile Gabriel had deteriorated from an attractive, if mischievous-looking, healthy lad, into a pale, rakish, discontented youth, and from a keen, painstaking learner of a useful trade into a careless idler whom his employer had no further use for. Being unemployed, he speedily drifted into serious crime, and presently appeared on a charge of larceny. Even his father could not help being convinced by the evidence in this case. Gabriel was given a chance of regaining character by being bound over on probation under my supervision. But the father held that the police were to blame, notwithstanding; they had hounded him out of his employment and driven him to that.

It seemed good to me to magnify my powers so as to give the lad the real chance he would never get at home under the guidance of so eccentric a parent. Moreover, there were many indications that he required a sterner discipline than it would be easy to secure for him under a master on land. A tramp schooner, about to take a rough cargo

from Cardiff, and expected to be absent from British shores for more than a year, was short-handed. Her captain was a kind but firm disciplinarian who had rendered excellent service in the training of other youths he had been good enough to take from me. He allowed me to sink more deeply into his debt by offering Gabriel a berth. And I am afraid I must confess that I caused the boy's father to imagine that he had no option but to allow his son to accept the offer. I did this the more willingly as Gabriel was most anxious to go to sea. The father naturally complained a good deal of persecution, but nobody worried much about his complaints. The lad got off, and the captain speedily licking him into shape, he returned home after eighteen months' absence greatly improved both morally and physically. But he thought he had lost all taste for a sailor's life; he had found the discipline severe.

Settling down to work as a labourer at an iron foundry, he lived industriously and honestly ashore for about a year. The war came, and the demand for men on land and sea. He chose the sea, saying he could be most useful there. And by all I hear he has been useful indeed.

Here is an extract from a letter his skipper wrote a while ago:

"Gabriel is a capital fellow to have by one in times like these. He's as sharp as a needle, and wants telling nothing twice. When he gets an order he carries it out at once and to the letter. As for pluck, he's afraid of nothing; and he'll work like a galley-slave."

That says something for the eighteen months' discipline he counted severe. A letter he wrote himself to me confirms this impression:

"We all say it isn't any use grumbling. The work we are doing has got to be done, and we've got to risk mines and submarines,

and thank God that the German battleships and cruisers and gunboats daren't come out. We show no lights at night, and there are no lights ashore; but we know why, and we're not bothering. If it is a bit miserable, especially when there's a fog, it soon seems to be daylight, and then we're all right. Besides, we have so much to do we've no time to know much about anything except our work. There's only one thing I should like: I should like to have a go at the Germans. Of course we're feeding our warships, and that counts; but it seems rather a tame job sometimes, and I wish I could chuck it up and join the army; and then I think again, I'm more use here, having learnt sailing, and the captain telling me I must stay where I am."

And while Gabriel is doing his best, his father entertains the customers (who would prefer that he should cut his eloquence so as more quickly to cut their hair) with criticisms of Governments, national and municipal. It is whispered also that he does not spare individuals, notably a wretch who forced his son to go to sea.

Tiresome as such-like fathers are, there is another type unspeakably more intolerable, some of which I have had the misfortune to offend. One individual had a son of fifteen who led a gang of lads in the pastime of dropping bricks from railway bridges upon passing trains, and when driven from that amusement changed over to the highly diverting entertainment of throwing stones at insulators fixed upon telegraph poles, being successful in doing much damage thereby. When caught and brought to book, those under fourteen were very properly given a taste of the birch rod; in the cases of those over fourteen the

magistrates had, of course, no power to inflict similar punishment, so a stiff fine was imposed, with the explanation that the Bench were debarred by law from ordering the birch for boys of their age, but if the parents cared to consent to their sons receiving that most fitting punishment the fines would be remitted. In every case, except that of the ringleader, the magistrates' suggestion was readily accepted. The ringleader's father had made up what he called his mind that his son had only done what any boy would do, and held the decision of the justices to be unconscionably harsh. He paid the forty shilling fine with a growl, and bore home his unwhipped son to engage unchecked in further lawlessness. It was not long before he had to appear at Court again on account of his son's misdeeds. The charge was exactly similar, only this time the lad was at the head of a different gang, the birching of the boys previously of his company having deterred them from indulging in pastimes of that sort again. It is a pity that the magistrates did not see fit to send the ringleader to a reformatory; possibly they did not regard it as likely that his father would persist in the attitude of mind he had shown on the former occasion. At any rate, all the rest were birched as before, while the leader again got off with a heavy fine, which his father paid. It was proved that a servant of the railway company had been badly injured and the safety of passengers jeopardized because of the windows of running trains being smashed by these stone-throwers; also that an engine-driver had narrowly escaped death from a heavy missile dropped within an inch of his head from one of the bridges infested by these young hooligans. It could not of course be proved that any one of these lads had actually caused any particular item of damage complained of;

but it was most conclusively proved that on several occasions they had thrown stones at trains and dropped bricks on engines. In a healthy state of public opinion, a father who condoned such conduct on the part of his son would be pilloried as a fool in the estimation of every decent citizen. As things are, there were many found to agree that this man was right in contending that "boys will be boys" and that "we've all been just as bad."

Not having been a particularly good boy myself, my own ears are apt to be tickled by such phrases. But I remember that no senior was ever found in my juvenile days to pretend to condone my offences or the offences of my companions. When we got ourselves into a scrape, which was not seldom, we took our punishment, earnestly hoping that our parents and guardians would hear nothing of the matter. We had a not unnatural reluctance to face the further penalties we knew we must pay in that event for disgracing our families. And it seems to me that it was this certain marking upon discovery of even trifling offences that kept juveniles of my day away from gross misdeeds. Certainly no boy I ever knew as a companion would have dreamed of indulging in such conduct as I have described, if only because experience of punishment for minor offences suggested hanging as the likely reward for that sort of thing.

So when the father of this young villain continued to encourage his lad in wrong-doing, I conceived an intense dislike for his policy, and sought by every means in my power to thwart it. I might as well have tried to prevent darkness falling after sunset. The lad kept out of the hands of the police until he was over sixteen years old, and consequently ineligible for a reformatory, then he developed into the worst character I ever knew for his age and in his par-

ticular line of crime. Out of sheer, wicked, wanton mischief, under the pretence that he had been wrongfully accused by his foreman of idling, he smashed up with a hammer much valuable machinery in the workshop where he was employed. The foreman, coming on the scene of disorder, lost his temper, and administered the boot to the miscreant, following that by dismissing him from his situation, but instituting no legal proceedings. The father went to threaten the foreman with grave penalties, and the foreman, thrashing him also, was summoned for assault and fined.

This delighted both the young outlaw and his father. The youth continued his mad career, getting work in another machine workshop, and making himself a nuisance by secretly destroying the workmen's tools and getting innocent boys suspected as culprits. One of these, finding out his tricks, stood up to him like a man, and, though much smaller, gave him a sound drubbing. Phil was dismissed from the situation, to vent his spite by organising another gang of young ruffians with whose assistance he waylaid the boy whose courage had been too much for him, and so seriously assaulted him with sticks and stones that his life was for some time despaired of. Living in the neighbourhood they did, the injured lad's parents feared to complain lest worse mischief befell them, and the cowardly Phil went unpunished. For a while a state of mild terrorism existed because of the doings of the gang, the ringleader, now following no occupation, having time to further elaborate his plots and put them more readily into execution. An aged widow who earned a precarious livelihood for herself and her cripple daughter by baking bread and pastry for her little shop was the next victim, the shop being plundered of its contents under the very eyes of

its proprietor, who was too infirm and too terrified to even attempt to defend her goods. Again the police were baffled by a conspiracy of silence on the part of both complainant and defendants, the old woman being deterred from prosecution by threats of personal violence to herself and her invalid child.

What wickedness Phil would not ultimately have become capable of had he kept clear of assaulting the one person who alone mattered it is hard to say. But the father falling ill, and money getting scarce, Phil was requested to find work after enjoying the pleasures of idleness for eight months. The lad gave an impertinent refusal, couched in obscene and profane terms. This was too much even for his father, who, years too late, attempted to enforce obedience. Weak from disease, he rose from the chair he had occupied in his comfortable living-room, and staggered to a corner of the apartment to reach a stick with which he proposed to chastise the offender. Phil was beforehand with him. Seizing the stick himself, he felled his father with a heavy blow, and next knocked down his mother and sister, who attempted to interfere. Then he smashed pictures and crockery and furniture, behaving like a raving madman. Neighbours were attracted by the screams of Phil's victims and by the noise of his destructive fury. They pacified him as one might pacify a crying child, soothing him and begging him to give over. He ceased, was good enough to overlook the moral outrage his father had committed upon him in consideration of the assurance he received that it was now understood who was the real master of the house, and left the scene in triumph, while the neighbours tidied up the ruins, and his parents and his sister recovered somewhat. He was unfortunate enough to be caught by the police that same night as he was

cowardly assaulting an old man who had ventured to reprove him for purposely knocking out of his hand a basket he was carrying.

When he was charged with that offence next day, no father appeared to defend him or to pay the fine imposed when the case had been proved. Phil was sure his father would pay. The police afforded him the opportunity, but the father was adamant. Faced with prison at last, Phil sent for me. I told him to take like a man the punishment inflicted in default of payment of the fine, and come to me when the term was served. He came, and after a while was sent to sea, his father well and at work again, not caring whither he went. The skipper who took Phil in hand understood perfectly the sort of youth he was taking; and, before many days were gone, some one else understood as well as I the sort of person the skipper was. Frankly, I am not prepared to swear that the rope's-end was never used during the voyage to Pencola. It is hardly reasonable to suppose that the downright conversion which Phil had undergone when next I saw him two years later can have been brought about by any means other than the very reverse of those the lad had previously been used to. Let us be content with the result and not enquire too closely into the means of its attainment. It is something to know that, after four years' experience, Phil is still content to serve under the same captain, and that the captain has been employed on special service under the Admiralty practically ever since the outbreak of war. Their ship has been engaged in many a perilous enterprise, and the captain's testimony is that Phil has "never shown the white feather yet."

Phil's letters are not sensational. Here is a sample:—

"Shovelling coal into a furnace all day and

all night long, that's our bit what we are doing for old England. I reckon we are never so much as thought of at home. We're black and mucky with coal dust and sweat, and we've as poor a chance as any, I say, of getting away if we should be torpedoed or strike a mine. I wish I'd a new pipe. I dropped mine over the ship's side when I was getting some fresh air last night and looking at the periscope of a submarine. We were all a bit excited, but not frightened. I don't know how I came to drop my pipe. But I'm sick of cigarettes, and I'll be glad of another of any sort."

His pipe has long been replaced. I prefer that he should be dropping pipes over the side of a ship rather than be dropping bricks over the wall of a railway bridge. It is a pleasure to encourage any man in the performance of useful, honest, patriotic labour. But it is more than pleasant to hear of good work bravely done by one who came near to being a lifelong curse to himself and all who knew him. Phil's father takes a pride in the deeds of the son he ignorantly did his best to ruin, and thanks me often for the share he imagines I have had in the work of reformation. I claim no share at all. The full and complete credit is due in this case, as in so many, to splendid seamen who understand human nature and can create national wealth from national waste.

IV.

WITH THE FIRST CANADIAN CONTINGENT.

THE Court sat in a large, sombre room into which the sun never penetrated, brilliant electric lamps only accentuating the dreariness of the place. The Bench was composed of two genial magistrates eager to show any kindness consistent with due administration of justice. At the clerk's table were a few alert officials discharging their duties with calm impartiality. A pale, emaciated lad of sixteen, barefooted and without coat, stood in the brass-railed dock, his torn shirt and matted hair telling of utter neglect. Rocking herself on a seat beneath him sat the lad's mother, a frowsily dressed, abject-looking woman about forty years old. She kept her bleared eyes fixed on her son, and frequently shook a dirty fist at him as she mumbled denunciations of his wickedness while kind-hearted witnesses unfolded evidence on which a charge of larceny was based. The well of the Court was occupied by about a dozen languid and uninterested spectators, there only because free seats were provided, and for lack of better means of idling their time away.

Such was the setting of the tragedy in which my friend Arthur played a leading part years ago. He had offered a coat in pledge. A similar one was reported by the police as stolen that

same day. The pawnbroker detained both boy and coat until a constable arrived. It being manifest that nobody would dream of buying for him a garment of that shape, size, or quality, the lad was asked to give a reasonable account of how it came into his possession. He failed to do so, and was taken into custody.

The owner of the coat stepped into the witness-box and easily proved that it was his. He had left it in the vestibule of a city office on the morning of the day it was pawned. Missing it an hour afterwards, he had furnished a description when giving information of his loss to the police. The pawnbroker followed, telling of a communication from the police which caused him to detain the lad when he offered the coat in pledge. The police officer spoke of the lad's arrest, and of his refusal to give any account of how the garment came into his hands.

All the while the lad silently bent his eyes towards the floor of the dock. When the Chairman in a kind voice invited him to tell his own story of the affair, he silently raised his head but still failed to open his lips. Then the abject woman sitting below the dock was told she might speak. The Court officials had found difficulty in restraining her volubility during the hearing of the evidence. All she could do now was to stagger forward, sink into a seat by the clerk's table, and moan hysterically, "He is a bad lad, he is. He'll kill his poor mother, that he will. Whatever shall I do? Whatever shall I do?"

The mother being plainly worthless, the magistrates sought a means of helping the lad out of her custody. But he was past the reformatory age, and this was before the day of Borstal Institutions. He had several previous convictions recorded against him, all pointing to the

influence of an evil home. It was felt with real regret that the time had come when he must be severely dealt with, and a sentence of two months' imprisonment was imposed.

He heard the decision without the least change of demeanour, and was stepping down from the dock to an apartment opening on a passage to the cells when his mother recovered herself. Springing from her seat she glared after him like a wild beast, and pointing a finger quivering with passion, yelled angrily—

“You villain, to disgrace your poor father and me like this! Never come near us again while you live. You bad, wicked lad! You’ve nearly killed your poor father, and you’ll kill me before you’ve done. You’re a villain, that’s what you are, and naught else!”

Before the miserable woman could sink again into real or simulated hysterics, the magistrates ordered her removal from the Court. It was a disgusting and painful scene, fit only to be brought to a speedy end. The Court idlers were roused to mild excitement. All others realised that the woman was sunk beyond reach of shame, and that her behaviour was induced by fear of censure for her own misdeeds and by physical and mental degeneration resulting from a drunken and vicious life. The one thing remaining was to attempt to save the lad from utter ruin.

Taking advantage of the mother’s mood, I got her to place him under my complete control after his discharge from prison. I then gave her no opportunity either of driving him from her door or of receiving him into her melancholy dwelling. He never returned to the two evil-smelling rooms he had called home, where his unmarried parents had brought into the world eleven children, six of whom were soon to die,

and the rest to be brought up to beg or steal and so help to provide an unspeakably vile couple with means of debauchery. He went instead to the home of a large-hearted farmer who had heard the full story of his life, and who gladly offered him a chance of reformation. He worked tirelessly, as if he never could show adequate appreciation of his new home. After twelve months' careful supervision, his master decided that no ground existed for doubting Arthur's honesty. Whatever had happened in the past was certainly not due to anything evil in the boy's character. Thenceforward so long as he stayed at the farm he enjoyed his master's full confidence.

It was the middle of an early springtime. The Nottinghamshire trees, decked out in sumptuous robes of every delicate shade of fresh luscious green in woods thickly carpeted with bluebells and resonant with the music of innumerable birds; the meadows prodigally clothed with rich grass spangled with flowers; the bright sunshine flooding fields in which flocks and herds grazed or men and horses laboured, spread a grateful prospect before my eyes long weary of the sordid slums of a great city. A youth whistled a lively air as he followed a plough drawn by two magnificent horses in straight furrows across a long, gently undulating field. As he brought the plough round to recross the field, his master, who was with me, called him to join us.

With a "Woa, Beauty; woa, Diamond," he brought his charges to a halt and came up, followed by a patient English shepherd dog which evidently regarded him with special favour. A vigorous, clean-limbed, merry, healthy-looking youth, he appeared as little like the Arthur of two years before as day is like night; yet he it was. The time had come for him to leave

that pleasant scene with the prosperous farmstead nestling among trees at the edge of a rich meadow. His master, at much personal inconvenience and loss, was about to give another outcast the chance that Arthur had so profitably received. Arthur was about to go to Canada to help to supply an urgent need for just such well-trained hands as he on the farms of the Dominion.

Knowing as he did many lads who had already gone thither from that and neighbouring farms, the boy had for long looked forward to the day when he would be given the chance of emigration. Stimulating accounts of progress and prosperity reached the farms from time to time concerning those lads. It was plain that while Arthur felt regret at leaving infinitely the best home he had ever known, and at parting from tried and true human friends as well as faithful dumb companions he had learned to love, regret was tempered by a keen desire to share in the romantic life of the new world of which he heard such glowing stories. I was glad to find him reconciled to the plan it had seemed best to make for him and for others whom I would gladly have had stay where they were. But many lads were waiting for just such a training as these had enjoyed. And masters willing to undertake the task were all too few. By transferring to Canada skilled farm hands worthy of the high wages and solid prospects they would find in situations actually awaiting them there, the places they vacated here were available for other lads now as they themselves were once, but who, under patient, kindly instruction might reasonably be expected to turn out equally creditably.

Except to enquire if I had seen Wilfred yet, the lad had nothing to say worth recording

before he turned from us to resume his work. He looked round to nod a farewell as the horses reached the middle of the furrow, and, followed by the shepherd dog, disappeared down a gentle slope once more whistling gaily. His master then drove me in a dogcart to a farm three miles away that I might interview Wilfred.

Wilfred was motherless. His father, a skilled workman, used to see him provided with clothing and food, then left him to the care of a busy landlady who found all her time occupied in attending to the wants of numerous lodgers. The lodgings were good. The woman was an honest, capable, clean person. But she understood absolutely nothing of boys. Having no children of her own, she seemed to regard all young persons as differing from grown people in no respect except size. When the police began to call at her house to issue cautions because the boy had kicked balls where he should not have kicked balls, the good woman regarded herself as disgraced by Wilfred's conduct, and complained to his father very bitterly. Not wishing to risk losing lodgings which he found convenient, the father roundly rated Wilfred, who failed to see what all the pother was about. Probably he connected the fuss rather with the landlady's temper than with the police visit. At any rate he continued to kick a ball about as he walked along the street, and a summons was duly delivered.

It is of course annoying for a pedestrian to have his meditations disturbed by a muddy ball striking him in the face as he takes his walks abroad; it is equally vexatious for the driver of a restive horse to find his steed startled from a similar cause, and no doubt bye-laws are neces-

sary to prevent boys from using our streets to the annoyance of older folk. But the real solution is surely the provision of more, and more accessible, playgrounds. Many lads persist in doing just what Wilfred did, with as little real intention of breaking the law. He was one of nineteen to appear at Court for the same offence on the day of the hearing of his summons for playing football in the street. In common with the rest, he was cautioned as to his future conduct and required to pay half a crown towards the costs of the case.

That half-crown was grudgingly paid by the father, who, when the poor lad got home, took full penalty out of his son's back. The stupid fellow had allowed himself to be wrought to white heat by his landlady's complaint that she was not going to have the police coming to her house as though she were a thief. Living under such conditions it is not surprising that Wilfred found his lodgings only attractive for the purposes of taking meals and going to bed. The street became more and more his playground. He worked at a steel manufactory. His dinner-hours were occupied in playing cricket in summer and football in winter with lads who worked in his company, and the games were frequently resumed after working hours. The best playground within a mile of manufactory or lodgings was a rough piece of waste land outside the gates of the works. The game frequently extended into the adjacent street. It was inevitable that sooner or later another summons should be delivered at his landlady's residence. It was delivered sooner rather than later. But on this occasion the landlady chanced to be away, and her husband, who had himself been a boy, informed Wilfred that he must answer the summons, while advising his father not to

"make a song about it." Wilfred's sense of the enormity of his crime was blunted further by the fact that fifteen of his playmates were charged with the same offence. When he appeared before the Court he found there thirty-eight lads in all who had broken the self-same bye-law in various parts of the city.

The Chairman's face was a study as batch after batch of youthful offenders appeared before his colleague and himself. The lads, glancing at that stern countenance, expected very drastic punishment as he expatiated on the dangers to life and limb caused by thoughtless boys hurling missiles through the air, and possibly starting a young horse from a door at which its driver was delivering goods, causing the animal to gallop with a dray along a crowded street and knock down and crush to death women and little children. Fortunately such dread consequences had not so far resulted from the lads' carelessness. He hoped they would be warned in time. They seemed a hard lot. Some of them had been there before. He scarcely knew what was best to do with them; so he turned in mock solemnity to his colleague to enquire in a stage whisper, "What do you think? Hadn't they better go to prison for a month? They'll kick no footballs about the street there."

His colleague favoured more merciful treatment. The Chairman made the most of that. Addressing the culprits in a severe tone, he said—

"My colleague doesn't want to send you to prison. I think it would do you good to go. What are you going to do if we don't send you this time? Are you going to be good lads and promise never to come here again?"

They promised readily, and he went on—

"Very well; I don't know whether we're doing right. You have to thank this gentleman (his colleague) that you're not going to prison. Now

go in that room—the officer will show you—and all of you write a letter of apology, and promise not to come here again. Then we'll see what's to be done with you."

They went; a larger company took their place—the set Wilfred belonged to. Being older lads for the most part, they received more drastic censure from the Bench, but the same means of expiation were ordered as before.

In due course a long queue of boys passed before the Chairman bearing letters of apology in their hands. He read the letters one by one, silently and with a solemn face. Then, before he told the writers they might go, he warned them—

"You've all promised to be good lads. We shall keep these letters, and if you come here again they'll be here as well to give evidence against you, and very likely you'll be sent to prison. You're very lucky not to have gone to-day—very lucky indeed. But my word, if you come again, I wouldn't like to be in your shoes. Now go, and find a better place than the streets to play in."

I need hardly say that the lads had never stood in the least danger of being sent to prison either by the Chairman or his colleague. It was the Chairman's way of dealing with offenders of this type. And I must say it proved very effective, especially as he spared no effort to secure the provision of proper playgrounds by the city corporation. He felt on the one hand that boys could not be allowed to imagine they had a right to make themselves an annoyance by their games, and on the other that neither fines nor imprisonment are often necessary to correct their mischievous breaches of bye-laws. It is tolerably clear that he contrived to give the lads the impression that what he had threatened they would certainly come to one day except they considered and amended their ways. Not one of the lads who

appeared that day before the Court has been brought up since upon any charge whatsoever. But few men are able to create the same impression by similar means. I have heard others give similar homilies and directions and known them utterly fail.

At the Chairman's invitation I perused several of the letters the boys had written. All began with a stereotyped opening, according to a constable's instruction evidently. Then followed divers quaint methods of expression. I select a few:—

"I am very sorry I've been brought here, and I promise not to come here again if I can help it."

"I am sorry I was caught playing football, and I will try not to be caught again no more."

"I promise never to be found playing football in the street again, and I'm much obliged to the gentlemen who have let me off this time."

"I am glad I have got off, as it would have been a bad job if I had been sent to prison for footballing, and I will watch as I am not caught any more."

Then Wilfred's gem:—

"I am sorry I was playing football when the policeman came. I don't want to go to prison, and I know I shall be sent if I come here again, so I hope I shall never be caught any more for a long while."

Of all the thirty-eight, not one expressed regret that he was playing. Why should he? He did not feel the least regret. That was as expressed, because he had been caught. Few went so far as to promise not to appear again before the Court. The utmost they felt in their honest young hearts it was possible for them to do in this uncertain world, was to promise to exercise greater circumspection so as to avoid being caught again. And the Chairman was content. It was better so than that they should have given a firmer but less

sincere pledge. After all, they had worried the police rather than committed any serious breach of the law.

But in Wilfred's case no crime could well have been more heinous in the estimation of his landlady, when in spite of her husband's efforts she learned the truth from some gossip on her return home. She went to the incredible length of giving the boy's father notice that he must find other lodgings or else have his son sent away. It chanced that I had placed a boy from the same neighbourhood on a farm. I was approached in the hope that I would do Wilfred a similar service. There was at that time not the slightest reason that I could see for doing so. I read a sharp lecture instead to both father and landlady. Wilfred went on steadily with his work, made no further appearance at the Court, and for some months passed out of my mind, until I saw him entering a common lodging-house one day in a particularly evil part of the city. Enquiry showed that his father had been taken to a hospital suffering from an incurable disease, and, unable to endure the ceaseless bickerings of the landlady, Wilfred had made the unfortunate exchange of lodgings which brought him again under my notice. I removed him to the house of a widow, who provided him with a comfortable home, and who would have mothered him had he given her reasonable opportunity. But he had acquired a taste for the society of questionable companions during his brief stay at the lodging-house. It was necessary to break him from their dangerous company by removing him from the city. He was fond of animals, and his mechanical skill enabled him to make himself useful to a farmer who had many modern implements in use on his farm, so that, while he learned portions of the duties of a farm hand, of which he was more ignorant than a

farmer cares for a boy of seventeen to be, he was able to do much that the average country lad has no conception of. He quickly learned to tend cattle, to milk, to feed and groom horses. After two seasons he could plough a fairly straight furrow, besides having picked up a good general knowledge of the many and varied duties to be discharged on a large and well-managed farm. His special line, however, was the repairing of machinery. Next to that he liked the poultry-rearing department of farm work.

After leaving Arthur I found Wilfred on that bright spring day busy in a shed, tinkering up a separatory which had ceased to do its work properly, to the great inconvenience of the farmer's wife. I discovered that good woman to be reluctant to part with a boy so exceedingly useful to her. There were higher reasons, too. Although she had sons of her own, her heart was big enough to find a place for the motherless lad to whom her home had been a veritable paradise for two years, and who had shown appreciation of her kindness in a hundred ways. She felt Wilfred's impending departure for Canada as greatly as though one of her own children were leaving her roof. "I shall miss him," she said, "wherever I stir about the place." Her husband also realised that he was losing an admirable servant. But loyalty to a plan designed to assist a succession of lads to a career of usefulness, and willingness to co-operate in all its stages, made it necessary after two years to pass on such lads as cared to emigrate, and receive in their room others waiting for the vacated places in which to work out their own social regeneration.

As for Wilfred, his mind was full of schemes to be put into operation when he reached the Dominion. He had long treasured the dream of emigration, and looked with eagerness for the day

about to dawn. He was sorry enough to leave a home and a master and mistress he had learned to value. But his mood was not one to dwell upon that. He was concerned chiefly with the business of getting all the machinery and implements about the place into good working order before he went. Reapers, hay and turnip cutters, cake-breakers, drills, ploughs—all had been carefully overhauled. The separatory represented the last mechanical contrivance needing his attention, and it was repaired before I left the farm. When he had finished the task he took me to inspect the poultry-yard, showing me with some pride various clever improvements he had made to sundry incubators. The turkeys, geese, ducks, and fowls were in a condition which went far to justify Wilfred's reputation as an expert poultry-farmer. I was much struck also with the cleanliness and the ingenuity of all that appertained to the working of the dairy-farm which he had found to occupy much of his attention. Then he turned to tell me of his plans for the future. It was evident that he meant to get on in the bright land of promise which opened out before him.

"It will be grand to own my own farm, as I mean to do, some day," he said, "and I shall have good buildings, and keep everything in good repair. You must come over and see me a year or two after I get settled down on my own freehold. We'll go round together and see Arthur, and Jack, and Paul, and all the rest—I'm going to look after their machines for them—and we can have a kind of agricultural show, and you will be the judge. We shall all want you to think our farm's best."

I was at a loss to know how he and Arthur had become mutually acquainted, and how he came to be aware that I knew, or for the matter of that how he knew, Jack and Paul. They had met, I

found, at neighbouring market-towns, had discovered that they all hailed from the same city, and that all were serving a sort of apprenticeship for Canada. The connection between each one and myself then became fairly obvious.

A short railway journey brought me to the farm where I found Jack busily employed in grooming a fine shire horse, which he told me was to be exhibited shortly at a famous show, where he was perfectly certain it would secure the first prize. He was not a little disappointed, inasmuch as he would no longer be in England when Black Pearl gained that proud distinction. His master had promised, however, to forward after him to Canada a newspaper containing the story of the horse's triumph.

Jack had always been passionately fond of animals. Indeed he was introduced to me by a police-officer, who felt bound to take the lad into custody for his own good since for three successive nights he had found no better place to sleep in than a large dog-kennel, the house of a retriever he had made friends with. Jack had no mother. Of his idle, drunken, brutish father there is no occasion to say much. After the mother had died of neglect and blows and starvation, endured with stoical patience, the father had simply continued his old way of living, while the lad picked up a few coppers to provide himself with scanty daily fare by carrying parcels for passengers using the railway stations. It never entered Jack's head to look to his father for support, or sympathy, or guidance. For a few months after his mother's death he had stayed at the same lodging-house. But he always knew he had to pay his own way. The keeper of the lodging-house dealt directly with him. Neither considered Jack's father as in any way responsible. Consequently when the

winter came round, and fewer passengers provided fewer parcels for carrying, the lodging money could not be earned. The luxury of a bed had to be dispensed with. Nobody in the lodging-house blamed the father. It was held that at fifteen years old Jack was capable of earning his own living and must be made to do it.

So he lost his cubicle there and drifted altogether apart from his father. During the winter he was forced to be content with a fourpenny bed anywhere on such nights as he could raise the necessary pence, and to avail himself of the hospitality of the retriever when he had no money. The prosperous nights when he could afford the luxury of a sixpenny lodging seemed to be gone for ever.

One of the many persons whose social regeneration dates from the day they got into the hands of the police, Jack was handed over to my care after the Court had concluded that his only offence consisted of preferring to sleep in a dog-kennel instead of applying for help from the Guardians. It would have been better for Jack had he so applied in the early days of winter. He would have received kind treatment, and might have escaped an illness brought about by the exposure and privations his mistaken independence caused him to endure. Possibly also, the Guardians would have been able to awaken a sense of responsibility in the father, though that is very unlikely since they had no power to use dynamite.

It was impossible for Jack to take up work of any sort for a month after coming into my hands. He had to obtain help during that time from the Poor Law after all, being admitted to an admirable hospital for which the Guardians are responsible. Here he received treatment until he was completely restored to health. Then he was given a start at the farm where I visited him that day.

Horse-breeding was the leading feature there.

Jack was instantly at home. He had long admired the fine railway dray horses engaged in town trade, and was delighted to find half a dozen shires at the farm obviously superior to any of those. The foals also greatly attracted him. He was much disappointed when his work at the beginning proved to have more to do with cows and pigs than with horses; yet he took to them almost as affectionately. Before he had been at the farm a month he volunteered to sit up one night to nurse a valuable pig, the mother of eleven little ones, which was alarmingly ill. His love of animals had been noticed; his master trusted him with the duty he had volunteered to discharge; the pig was given the attention and medicine prescribed, and a speedy and complete recovery ensued. From this beginning he became a sort of amateur veterinary surgeon. He seemed to perceive intuitively when any animal was ailing and to know exactly what to do to bring it round. He had not the slightest objection to losing a night's rest whenever he could by so doing render nursing service to any sick living creature. Once at lambing time he had tended the ewes for twelve successive nights. Again he had on one occasion in the depth of winter spent four nights in bringing safely through the critical period of a grave illness a shire horse worth two hundred pounds. He made himself quite famous in that locality, and consequently had few idle moments, being in his spare time readily at the call of every cottage owner of an ailing dog or cat or pig.

Nor had his fondness for this sphere of usefulness prevented him from learning thoroughly as much as any lad can be expected to learn of general farm work in two years. During that time he had wonderfully thickened in build, and, though not much taller, was in all other respects different from the puny creature he had once been.

"I shouldn't be able to get into a dog-kennel now, without it was built for a dog as big as an elephant," he told me, reminded by my presence of his state a little more than two years before. "If I get as fat in Canada as I've got here I shan't be able to walk by the time I'm thirty."

He was of the same mind as the other lads. He combined hearty appreciation of his present life with keen anticipation of adventures and prospects hoped for in the near future in a new world.

Martin and Paul lived at a farm two miles away. I found them just as eager for change as Jack, and their master and mistress showing the same regret at losing their services as Jack's had shown when they told me, "We hope the next lad will be half as good. We shall never see his like again."

Martin was two years older than his brother Paul. Their father, a ship's fireman, was drowned at sea in their infancy. Their mother, a good woman, had brought the lads up respectably, aided by a little out-relief granted by the Guardians of the Poor. The neighbourhood in which they lived was rough. The lads were boisterously high-spirited, and while still at school were perpetually getting into scrapes for boyish tricks such as pulling the doctor's door-bell and running away. When Martin started working he succeeded to the post of captain of a gang of boys whose spare-time amusement was fishing in a canal from whence no living person had been known to land any fish above half an ounce in weight. It was a heart-breaking business for such a lad, yet he stuck to the job with a grim determination that the captain of a rival gang fishing from the opposite bank should not be able to cackle over the greater prowess of his team. It was inevitable that some-

thing more exciting should be found to enable Martin to let off steam. The rival captain's father, a crusty person who kept ward over the canal locks, being absent from his duties for a brief space when a boat came up, Martin without authority opened a lock. The keeper, returning, thumped him for reward. Martin recounted the incident to his brother Paul. That night the pair stole to the lock gates in the darkness and reconnoitred; the enemy had a large stack of timber recovered from the water. It was planned to hurl the whole collection back into the canal. Captain Martin gathered his force, and in a few minutes willing workers carried out the plan. As the last plank splashed into the water the lock-keeper's door opened. The rival captain's ear caught the sound. He gave the alarm and rushed after the retreating company, his father following at his heels. All escaped but one, who fell into the pursuers' hands through being tripped up by a tow-rope lying across the path. From this prisoner sufficient information was gleaned to sustain a charge of doing wilful damage to certain property, and eight culprits, including Martin and Paul, had to pay a shilling each towards damages and costs, besides being introduced to a person whom they were told would try to keep them straight.

That desirable end was attained by securing their admission to membership of a local company of the Boys' Brigade. Owing to benefits arising out of the drill and instruction they enjoyed there, more than anything else, every one of that set of lads answered the country's call in the hour of danger.

Six months after the canal escapade the mother of Martin and Paul died, bequeathing the lads to my care. They were both of working age by this time, but their earnings were insufficient to main-

tain them in respectable lodgings and to clothe them decently. This difficulty was solved by placing them on the farm. Here they were able from the outset to repay the farmer the cost of their maintenance and clothing, and also to earn a little pocket-money, while serving an apprenticeship to a useful calling. They worked willingly and well. I was summoned to the farm twice to solemnly warn them, on both occasions with my tongue in my cheek, against continuing to play pranks. Apart from this mischievous effervescence, which their disposition led me to expect, I had every reason to praise their general conduct.

The lady of the manor containing the farm tenanted by their master was a person who could not bear to part with money. Consequently her own home farm, which she personally managed, was in a chronic state of shortage of labour, especially marked at busy seasons of the year, and she was wont to issue appeals for help which her tenant farmers found it difficult to ignore. Among other lads, Martin and Paul, after a sufficiently heavy day's labour for their rightful masters, went night by night for two months during the corn-harvesting season to assist at the manor farm in response to one of these appeals. They next gave three strenuous days' work to complete the safe ingathering of the crops. Naturally expecting some reward for all this additional toil, they went gaily to an offered harvest supper which seemed to promise a measure of compensation. A none too plentiful feast was spread on a long table in the servants'-hall. The lads seated themselves, only to find their places laid at smaller tables in two corners of the apartment. Somewhat crestfallen they removed to the small tables, and the farm men who had helped only during the three whole days took the vacated places at the

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central board. While the men awaited the arrival of a joint of roast-beef, the lads at the side tables, to their inexpressible disgust, were served with huge plates of oatmeal porridge. They toyed at their messes with large spoons and bewildered grimaces, but managed by a great effort to clear the plates as the roast-beef was brought in, smoking hot. The appetising odour awakened the hitherto slumbering interest of the farm men, who began a cheery conversation while a carver set to work on the viand deposited on their table. All the lads' faces were now eagerly turned to the central board. They felt out of the fun. They did not see why they should not share the honours of the main table. Still they might have been content had they received a due share of the feast at their humbler places. Imagine their dismay when their hostess approached them and inquired if they would take a little more porridge!

They were speechless. In dumb show they contrived to indicate that their hunger for porridge was satisfied. Their hostess bade them a harsh good-night, and before they could collect their scattered wits they found themselves in the drive leading from the manor-house. That was the recognition all their labour for the lady of the manor received!

It was not to be expected that Martin was going to put up with such treatment without protest. The manor sheep and cattle were ill-fed. Indeed the local representatives of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals had taken proceedings against their owner more than once. If his companions and himself had been denied a reasonable supper, there was no good reason Martin knew of why the sheep and cattle should not partake of a full meal for once in a lifetime. Accordingly he proposed to the other lads the

removal of five of the iron hurdles constituting the fence dividing an excellent field of turnips from the plot of bare pasture on which the manor flocks and herds grazed. The suggestion was welcomed by the incensed lads. Half an hour after leaving their porridge-plates they had the satisfaction of seeing the manor sheep and cattle contentedly munching turnips in the forbidden field by the light of the harvest moon.

Judging by the number of turnips wholly or partly consumed, the animals must have fully entered into the spirit of the proceeding; but their mistress failed to see the humour of the thing when next day she beheld the havoc played on the root crop. The local police officer was speedily summoned. After a long and minute examination he communicated with his inspector, who came with a detective to assist investigations. It was plain that certain miscreants had removed five iron hurdles from the fence, thereby enabling the sheep and cattle to get into the turnip-field and commit damage to the crop. But who were the miscreants, and where were the hurdles? The inspector and the sergeant failed, as the constable had failed, to elucidate the mystery, and the superintendent was brought from a distance to succeed by a mere accident.

In the course of his investigations he learned from various sources of the meanness of the lady of the manor, one farmer chancing to mention the niggardly way in which she had rewarded the lads who had helped to gather her harvest home. That provided the clue. Martin and Paul were examined by the superintendent. They frankly told him all the truth, and conducted him to a pond into which the missing hurdles had been cast. The hurdles were recovered; the fence was restored; and the superintendent, after gravely cautioning the boys against further acts

of reprisal, advised the lady of the manor that it was not in his judgment a case for prosecution.

This advice was little to her taste. She insisted that she should be furnished with the names of the culprits, and claimed damages from the farmers employing them, declaring that, notwithstanding the superintendent's opinion, she would take legal proceedings unless her claims were met. The farmers with one consent refused. She then demanded that the lads should be dismissed from their situations. The farmers sent for me. There was no saying what she would do if she were not pacified. They were determined neither to pay damages nor to part with the lads. But farmers had been refused further tenancies when leases expired on that estate before then, and might again. It would perhaps be well if I could see the owner and mollify her somewhat.

I was not unduly anxious for the interview, but I could do no other than see the thing through. It was late October. The air was crisp. A handful of fire burned dully in the capacious grate of a large dining-room. The furniture and ornaments appeared to have been unchanged for generations. Curtains and carpet were much faded and worn. The lady of the manor sat at a writing-table in a window, and invited me to take a seat near herself and twenty feet from the fire. She was aged and thin and wrinkled. Her hands shook as though she were starved through. I glanced towards the fireplace, in response to an impulse to suggest that she should move nearer to it, but the melancholy morsel smouldering in the grate met my gaze and stifled the suggestion unborn. It was a relief when she began to speak of the subject-matter of the interview. Whatever her economy of money she was prodigal of words. I had nothing to do for half an hour save to pretend to listen. I knew the whole gist of the

matter in thirty seconds, and had framed my reply. When she ceased I just said—

“Madam, you are probably aware that so far these boys have found few friends. Apart from this regrettable incident they appear to have done you nothing but good. I am sure that you will not desire for this piece of mischief to spoil their one chance of getting on in the world. With your permission they will stay at the various farms until next spring. They will have completed their training and earned an excellent character for honesty, industry, and intelligence by then; and I will undertake that they shall annoy you no more.”

It seemed wise to leave out for the moment any reference to what would happen if she persisted in an unreasonable attitude. I may as well say, however, that I had not the smallest notion of taking them from the farms.

The old lady was mollified by the appeal to her better self.

“What does it cost you to send a boy to Canada?” she enquired.

I told her the cost was approximately twelve pounds.

She started perceptibly.

“It seems a lot of money,” she said, “but it is a good thing to do. Very well: let them stay till spring, I will then give something myself toward the cost. Stay, I may as well do it now.”

To my astonishment she wrote a cheque for twelve pounds and handed it to me saying, “That will pay for one boy,” but she spoiled the effect of her generosity by adding—

“I hope they *will* behave themselves while they *do* stay. I shall hold you responsible; and I don’t think they will really do much good when they get to Canada. But it will be something to be rid of so much scum.”

What a contrast to that pitifully narrow, selfish, marred life each of the lads presented as I interviewed them afterwards one by one! None of them were likely to die as the lady of the manor died three years later worth a hundred thousand pounds. They would be fortunate if they lived ever to enjoy one-tenth her annual income. At that moment they were worth perhaps, could they liquidate their few possessions, two pounds apiece. But to own their high spirits, their glowing health, their careless optimism, their rollicking good-nature, was to possess a fortune indeed. They did not look at all bad, for scum! I did my best to be serious over the business of reproving them for the prank they had played. But I made a poor job of it. Their anxiety to please me made them ready enough to undertake to do nothing like that again, otherwise I should have come away feeling that as far as they were concerned my mission had failed.

As it was, I had to return three months later on a similar errand. Martin and Paul were wont to attend Sunday morning service at the village church. There was little hearty singing such as they enjoyed, but a good deal of ritual very difficult to intelligently follow. They were sufficiently bored by sermon time. And the sermon invariably sent them to sleep.

It would be difficult for any mortal to maintain that anything but good came of their going to sleep. Certainly they lost nothing thereby. Nobody could possibly lose anything by failing to hear the sermons preached there. Later on, the lads wrote in glowing terms of plain talks addressed to them by earnest men in a barn in lonely far-west Canada. They did not go to sleep while sermons were delivered then. It was mean of the preacher now to blame the lads if he did not know how to talk to them interestingly. What could

they be expected to care for the contents of a manuscript compiled from musty books, and drawled out in a monotonous sing-song? Tired after a week's labour, only suspended an hour before church-time when cattle had been looked after and other necessary Sunday work done, the lads would naturally fall asleep unless their minds were given suitable occupation. Only a very stupid person could expect them to do anything other than slumber in church, or play, or talk. One would have thought they had chosen a perfectly unassailable course, all things considered.

But the clergyman took it into his head that they must not be allowed to sleep, and instructed the clerk accordingly. On a certain Sunday morning they were rudely awakened by a series of hard knocks on the head from a beadle's staff with which the clerk had armed himself. There was some amusement created among members of the congregation but no appreciable increase of interest in a sermon, which all were now sufficiently awake to hear. The lads were of course furious, especially as their master thought himself in some way disgraced and gave them a jobation upon their return home. With an ingenuity they always showed, they traced out the person really responsible for the trouble. The preacher never raised his eyes from the manuscript; he could not possibly know who was asleep and who was not; yet the clerk would not have ventured to interrupt his sermon without orders. Therefore the clerk must have told of their slumbers so as to receive permission to disturb them. Such diligence deserved and found reward.

They watched him enter the church about four o'clock in the afternoon of a Monday when the vicar chanced to be away from home. When he entered the belfry to leave some tools he stored there, they sprang to the door, closed it upon

him, locked it securely, and, leaving the key in the lock on the outside, gleefully wended their way home.

Soon a bell was heard ringing; but bells were perpetually ringing from that church, and the villagers took little notice. Familiarity had bred contempt. The ringing ceased for a while; then started again. Not a soul heeded. All who heard regarded the sounds merely as signalling some freak of the "parson who be ringing bells everlastingly." He was doubtless keeping some festival about which they were indifferent. It was not Sunday, and only Sunday services interested them. It was not a passing bell—nobody was dead. The clerk's wife was very deaf. Her husband stayed late occasionally at the village inn. She marvelled that he had not been home to tea, but charitably remembering the inn, went to bed and to sleep at nine o'clock, confidently expecting that he would join her when he saw fit. The poor prisoner rang on until midnight quite in vain.

Martin and Paul then thought the joke had gone far enough, and stealthily leaving their beds ran from the farm to the church. It was the work of a moment to unlock the belfry door and beat a retreat. But their sense of humour was too acute to allow them to accomplish the liberation of their captive silently, and the peculiarly hearty sound of their laughter was so well known as to disclose their identity. The clerk was furious. Early next morning he complained to the lads' master, who wrote to me as though some fearful crime had been committed, begging me to come at once. For the life of me I could not tell why I had been troubled, and said so, greatly to the horror of the clergyman, who had returned home to join in the complaint. I made a pretence of lecturing the lads, but it was a half-hearted affair. My real opinion was expressed to their

seniors when the boys were gone. It was that their methods of dealing with lads were hopelessly wrong, and that had I been with Martin and Paul at their age, having been dealt with in that manner, I should most assuredly have taken and keenly enjoyed a hand in the clerk's discomfiture.

But these escapades were merely a memory now. The vicar came, and the clerk too, to bid the boys farewell while I was there, and a messenger also arrived bearing a parcel containing socks which the lady of the manor had knitted for her tormentors with her own hands. I left the lads milking the cows of that farm for the last time, and eagerly discussing where and under what conditions they could next undertake similar duties. Then I passed on to see the three other lads who had participated in the great turnip tragedy, and who lived on adjacent farms. A week earlier I had visited ten more lads who were to emigrate with the rest on the following day.

The history of their short lives was much alike. All had been brought under my notice by appearing at the Police Court for trifling offences. They had been removed for the most part from evil homes in city slums, thus gaining a fair chance in life. All were motherless, or, like Arthur, worse. The conduct of all at the farms had enabled their masters to speak of them in terms of unqualified approbation as servants from whom they parted with regret.

There were others beside masters and mistresses from whom the lads were loth to part. Arthur had found an invaluable friend in the aged house-keeper, who had made of the farm the best home he ever knew. The picture of her sweet pathetic face framed in the doorway of that happy homestead nestling among the trees, when she watched his departure and waved a last adieu, remained for ever in his memory. No doubt he sometimes

thought also of a scene enacted by the light of a stable lantern very early that same morning of departure when Diamond and Beauty turned their haunting, wondering eyes upon him as he raised his arms from their necks in dumb farewell, and of the poignant thrust of Bob's reproving whine when the faithful shepherd dog was forbidden to trot after the cart which was to take from his side the young master he would see no more.

Painful memories of recent separations lurked no doubt at all behind the eager, laughing faces of every one of the eighteen youths who assembled on the landing stage at Liverpool on the morning of embarkation, every boy's master having come to see him off, like me. A word of pride in a shire horse here, a fine foal there, a prize bull at this farm, and a remarkable pig at that, all told the same story; and what each lad was thinking was blurted out now and then in an awkwardly expressed wonder how things were going at the farm he had left. A great wail went up from thousands of parting friends as the big liner of which these eighteen lads formed but one hundredth part of the passengers left her moorings. The little group of lads was lost in the great company crowding her decks and waving frantic tokens of farewell to those who were more to them than we could ever be to the poor boys to whom we said adieu. It went to our hearts to realise that we but poorly filled the place of blood relations after all. It made us feel how cold a thing our care for these lads was when compared with the strong affection of hundreds of fathers and mothers there whose parting from their sons was as the tearing away of all that was dear and precious in their lives. As we stood among a crowd in which robust men wept and healthy women fainted, the great vessel became a speck

on the horizon. We had done our best for the boys. But their parents having utterly failed, or having gone from the world, the lads had lacked much we were unable to give. The lesson borne in upon us then and there was that the regeneration of the masses must be worked out in the homes of the people: that some means must be found for effecting a widespread reawakening of the sense of personal responsibility and duty.

Meanwhile the farmers were content to return, silent and keenly sensible of loss, to take up the task of moulding into beautiful shape the character of other young lives much marred at the beginning. I can never fully express the gratitude I owe to these excellent men and their excellent wives. They will not allow me to say much to them personally; and because I know it to be little to their taste I say no more here, though volumes might be written of their goodness and the half remain untold.

And I would briefly acknowledge also the help afforded by generous folk, many of them magistrates, who contribute handsomely to the financial needs of this work of reclamation. There are those known to me who never fail to respond in princely fashion to any appeal for the benefit of such-like lads. I wish it were possible for every one to see the great good their liberality aids to achieve. I am sure they would consider themselves as plenteously rewarded.

When Arthur had been a year in Canada, I received an urgent message asking me to visit his mother, who was dying in the workhouse hospital. She had sent for me, she told me, because she had something on her mind. She relieved her conscience, and the same night died. I wrote to tell Arthur of his mother's end, saying

no word of what she whispered almost with her latest breath. In a while his reply came. He was evidently grieved at the news of his mother's death, little as she had deserved that he should care for her at all. But how he had felt the bitterest wrong she had done him was revealed in the delicately put enquiry—

“Did my mother tell you who stole the coat?”

She did: she had stolen it herself, and had the heart to see her son suffer in her stead, and also mock him with abuse and pretended indignation so as the more effectually to cover her own crime. Moreover, Arthur had gone unwillingly to offer the coat in pledge at her bidding. She declared that a gentleman had given it to her for him; he must therefore say it was his own; she would redeem it, and he should wear it by and bye; meanwhile she stood in urgent need of money; if the coat were not pawned there could be no food that day. Only half convinced, the lad had gone. As soon as the pawnbroker's suspicions were aroused, Arthur guessed the whole truth and resolved to shield the mother who so ill deserved his devotion.

With his fellows Arthur prospered in the land of the maple and the pine. An occasional letter reached me, and I was shown letters from time to time addressed to the lads' old masters and companions, telling of their progress, and of their full satisfaction with the land of their adoption. Jack's services were in much demand over a wide and lonely district because of a reputation he quickly earned for skill in farriery, and Wilfred's mechanical knowledge took him many a long journey at the earnest call of owners of refractory machines. Martin and Paul maintained a name for playing pranks while gaining credit for an almost uncanny understanding of farming under new conditions. Arthur was reckoned as easily

the best ploughman ever sent to Canadian farmers on my recommendation. The remainder of those eighteen lads who sailed together earned high commendation for general industry and progress. All were looking shortly to owning their own freehold, as some whom they knew, sent out before them, owned theirs. They saw a hundred and eight similar lads scattered over the broad expanse, a tiny bit of which they occupied, after they themselves arrived in Canada, and they did all they could to make the newcomers feel at home, as the fifty-four lads who had preceded them did all possible to make them feel at home.

Then the great call came for the Dominion to help the Motherland. Of the hundred and eighty lads whom I had a share in sending out, a hundred and seven responded, and thirty-two sailed for England with the first Canadian Contingent. Arthur was there, and Wilfred and Jack, Martin and Paul—every one of the eighteen who left England together—when the transports reached Plymouth late in the autumn of 1914. They were visited more than once by three former masters whose earlier training had enabled them to acquire commissions in the new army. And these old masters met their old boys side by side with four of the new masters to whom they had passed the lads on, and who came to fight with them in the ranks, showing an all-round appreciation of their worth and character which was fittingly cemented in a day soon to come.

Facing death as became men who had forsaken all and journeyed thousands of miles to fight for Britain, the gallant Canadians wrote a brilliant page in history during the last week of April 1915. By devilish arts the enemy had forced back the French line, and by the same agency sought to overwhelm our Canadian division. How the Canadian brigades fought against fiendish foes

and foul devices—fought and won—will live for ever. Among the first to fall stricken with the poisonous gas was Wilfred; and Arthur, sorely wounded by a splinter of shell, sought to carry his incapacitated comrade to a place of safety. He bore his unconscious burden through a hail of shrapnel and machine-gun bullets, over the bodies of fallen friends and through pestilential vapour for a hundred yards, then fell himself a victim. He was found a while later struggling for breath beside the body of Wilfred, whose face lay black, and stark, and still. The poison had done its work. They bore Arthur to the field hospital to die.

Martin and Paul caught a glimpse of poisoned comrades in their agony, and fought with reckless gallantry to avenge the fiendish treachery of the enemy. Their exuberant spirits had found room for full course at last. With the rest of their company they hurled themselves in irresistible fury upon a foe whose cruelty they hated and despised. Horde after horde of the enemy broke upon them, till even the desperate valour of an overwhelming force flushed with the confidence of victory failed, and the Germans blenched, and quailed, and fled, themselves pursued by men terrible in righteous indignation. Thousands fell of friend and foe alike. But the losses of the enemy greatly outnumbered our own losses. They paid a fearful price for their accursed crime that day, and will pay a price still more fearful before the civilised world consents to look without contempt and loathing upon the nation guilty of that savage and inhuman baseness.

A slightly wounded temporary major limped about the hospital when Arthur was carried there. By almost a miracle he owned the face already purple from distress. The poor lad opened his eyes and recognised his old master. He had seen

him in khaki on Salisbury Plain, and in any case was too near death to exhibit surprise. Feebly extending his hand, he felt the warm grasp of his old master's fingers. With the utmost difficulty he made his last request: "You'll tell them how I died," and, his hand within that kindly grasp, he sank into unconsciousness and gently parted out of life.

Twelve of those thirty-two old boys of mine who formed part of the first Canadian Contingent died that day. Since then nine of the rest have yielded up their lives. Two are prisoners; four are grievously wounded. Martin, Paul, and Jack, with two others, have gone through so far without a scratch, though in the thick of every fight. It is only natural that Jack's letters should tell more of the sufferings of animals on the battlefield than of his own doings with rifle or bayonet. Martin's inability to forget the spectacle of the sufferings of comrades choked with poisonous gas is shared by his brother Paul, and mars the interest of their recent correspondence, easy as it is to understand the passionate indignation which breathes through every line. It is to Jake, a lad who followed them to Canada, that I owe this:—

"We have had a warm time so far. While we waited on Salisbury Plain we were afraid all the fighting would be finished before they gave us a chance. We were more than a bit wrong, but I think we've held our corner very well. Not one as I've met says he's sorry he's here. It's wonderful how many of our men are gone. But we say, better die than go under these brutes. We know we shan't go under, either. If we must die, there are plenty to take our place. Old England isn't going to be forsaken either by God or her sons."

V.

ON THE GREAT SHIPS AT SEA.

I HAVE met with people who entirely disapproved of any acquaintance I formed at the Police Court being allowed to join the Navy. Such persons have pointed to the fact that a high character is required of all who seek to enter there. As one friend tersely put it: "They don't want scum on warships."

I agree; but I contend that, of the one hundred and five fellows whom I have in any way influenced to join the Naval service, not one has deserved at any time to be classed as scum. If a boy or man be a thief, lazy, a drunkard, or a quarrelsome, wicked person, or if he have been convicted of any grave offence, such a one is most emphatically unfit for that honourable profession. I have never taken any other course in dealing with such than to assure him that it is hopeless for him to entertain ambition of that sort. And I do not know of one of that class who has secured admission to the service.

It is often forgotten that only a small percentage of the men and lads who appear in a Police Court are at the bottom appreciably worse than their fellows who remain outside. While I do not want to be objectionable, I cannot help remembering that the very man who has expressed himself

to me as most strongly against any lad who has blundered into wrong-doing being given the opportunity in question of retrieving himself, would, humanly speaking, never have been where he is but for the fact that he had a father who overlooked the grave faults of his youth and gave him, when he was twenty-three years old, a start in a profession quite different from that he was originally intended for,—a profession, indeed, which demanded a character such as he had not then the smallest title to. Because a lad has no friends worthy of the term, I entirely refuse to agree that he ought to be denied a chance which would have been thrust upon him had his fortune been more favourable. Therefore I have steadily disregarded the disfavour of narrow and unworthy folk. I have sought to give a helping hand to whosoever was willing to be helped. The method in which help could best be bestowed has depended upon the fancy, the ability, and the character of the person to be given a start. Many, I own, who would have loved to get aboard a man-of-war, were hopelessly disqualified, not always from their own faults. The sins of the fathers are visited upon children—and other people's sins too. But where a frank statement of the case would disclose no objection to admission to the Navy of a lad who had not been in a Police Court, however much he might have been thought to deserve to occupy the dock, I have never seen any reason, circumstances being precisely similar, for raising difficulties against the admission of a lad who had appeared before a Bench.

The proof of the pudding being in the eating, I propose to let the decision as to whether I have done right or wrong in this matter rest upon the manner in which my lads have served Britain. For my own part I have but one regret. I would I had sent more like them. I would that half a

score I see about me, who had in them once the makings of men, had been given the opportunity of becoming something very different from the useless parasites they have, for lack of suitable employment, degenerated into. What Brickly Tom became they might every one of them have easily become, given the chance never theirs.

I first met with Brickly Tom fourteen years ago. To be quite accurate, he was then Brickly Tom, junior. He inherited both his father's name and also his father's disposition to gain a livelihood by doing odd jobs with bricklayers, with a special fancy for unloading and stacking bricks. Brickly Tom, senior, had a strong disinclination for any occupation requiring constant application. He would work "like a horse" for a few hours at a stretch. Then he liked an interval so as to taste the pleasures of ale and rest. Under harsh industrial conditions, his fancy could only be humoured by a limited circle of employers, and these required his services only when they could find nobody else.

Following in his father's footsteps, Brickly Tom, junior, at twenty years old, had the misfortune to find himself penniless at the local feast-time, when he badly felt the need of money. It had been a particularly wet July. The ground occupied by a big collection of roundabouts, swing-boats, and all manner of catch-pennies, was everywhere sodden, and contained many miniature lakes. A plentiful supply of ashes was requisitioned, and men were wanted to spread the ashes, with a view to making paths through puddles. Brickly Tom, junior, volunteering, was engaged by a showman to deal with a section of the ground. He laboured hard, and, as usual, did his work thoroughly. The sun came out beautifully as he tackled the last six loads, rapidly drying the turf of a little hillock, which the showman's family, tired of being cooped up in

a caravan, seized upon as a likely spot for a picnic. A snow-white cloth was spread, and preparations for tea began.

Tom went on with his task, glancing occasionally towards the little hillock. Luscious strawberries and rich cream in abundance, tempting plates of bread and butter, cakes, and pastry might have failed to move Tom greatly, though their appeal could hardly be negligible. When a gentle breeze bore towards him the appetising odour of ham and eggs fried on a brazier, he capitulated, and leaned on his shovel, hoping for an invitation to join the merry company which now sat down to tea. But the showman, noticing that Tom's task was nearly done, thought only of dismissing him. Being in a good temper, he added a shilling to the four agreed upon as Tom's wages for the service, and sat down to laugh and joke with his family as the tea-cups were handed round.

Tom had a little heap of ashes left. He noticed that the party was in jovial mood, and quickly casting off any feeling of resentment at his own exclusion, determined to add to the gaiety of the picnic. Rapidly using his shovel, he scattered what remained of the ashes with astonishing dexterity over every person gathered for the picnic, every morsel of food, plate and dish, cup and saucer, leaving scarcely a square inch of the table-cloth without its portion of his contribution. Then he leaned on his shovel again and laughed till he came near to apoplexy.

Strangely enough, Tom himself and a few mischievous youths hanging idly about were the only persons who appreciated the joke. The showman so boiled over with indignation that he felt himself unable to offer remarks at all adequate to the situation, and left that task to his wife and daughters. He had good judgment. His own powers in that direction were not contemptible;

but he was a child compared with them. They lashed poor Tom unmercifully. It was long before he had a chance of offering any sort of defence. Not that the poor thing he put forth at last as an excuse carried much weight, being simply—

“Well, the gaffer never said as he didn’t want any muck-chucking there!”

How the police came to interfere in the matter I never quite understood. No doubt Tom’s misdeed had been exaggerated. He was arrested on a charge of doing wilful damage; but the charge was not sustained. It was plain that he had been guilty of horse-play, not crime.

Looking at the short, stiffly-built, powerful young fellow, hard as nails, good-humour written large upon every expression of his singularly mobile face, his keen blue eyes telling that he had in him the making of a proper man, I determined that his life should be no longer wasted if I could have my way. Stokers were badly wanted in the Royal Navy. He was exactly the type of man required. The fact that he had felt no desire for a seafaring life until I mentioned the matter to him accounted for the lack of enthusiasm with which he at first received my suggestion. In a casual sort of way he hinted that his parents would find it hard to spare him from home, and I was forced to ascertain whether they could be brought to endure the parting. Bricky Tom, senior, chanced to have lighted on a succession of evil days when I called, and being in a bad temper, declared that his son was welcome to go to a much warmer place than exists on this small fragment of the universe. My friend’s mother, a hard-working woman, sorely taxed to find the means of existence, was not conscious that she would miss her son’s contributions

towards the upkeep of the house. She would have preferred that he should settle down ashore and help at home, but seeing no hope of that was content for him to go to sea. His feeble objections being thus cleared out of the way, I took Tom, junior, to the recruiting office that very afternoon, and an uncommonly shrewd serjeant gave him no time to change his mind. To do Tom justice, he gave no sign of desiring to change it. From the moment he joined the Navy he showed great interest in his work, and immediately won the affection and esteem of his messmates.

I am not going to pretend that his love of horse-play vanished at once, or even at all. Rumours reached me that his fondness of sky-larking got him into not a few scrapes. I also heard that he at one period exhibited a tendency to drink hard when in port. But Miss Weston's influence cured that ten years ago, and he served thenceforward very creditably, save for a boyish love of mischief which would have still remained in him had he lived to be a hundred years old.

Seven years ago Tom's father became an inmate of an asylum. He had experienced several fits of *delirium tremens* before he came to that, and he died in the asylum after being a patient there a few months. The mother, worn out with hard work, and looking quite seventy years old whereas she was barely fifty, entered the workhouse. Tom heard of it. He had sent contributions fitfully at intervals, but now undertook to pay his mother two pounds a month. A home was found with a former neighbour. The poor woman lived comfortably there for three years, enjoying her son's gladly given help. She told me when last I saw her that it always came "to the day." She died very suddenly at

last. For three years Tom remained without a near relation in the world.

He served on the *Good Hope* when the war broke out. A letter he wrote me early in October seems to indicate that he had some faint premonition that his end drew near:—

“It was nice to hear from you, sir; and I’m keeping the little book [a New Testament] you sent me. I read a bit before I go on duty and when I come off every shift. We all seem to be turning a bit religious now. There’s Carrots, he’s writing to you same as me; he got his book all right, and he’s been reading a good deal. I made him a bit mad, like, last night. He was that interested in what he was reading when we’d done work, that we could make naught of him. So, to try whether we could get a bit of fun out of him, I pushed my finger into his hair. It’s very long just now, and you know how red it is. I was pretending to make my finger red hot, and when I pulled it out, I put it on a mate’s head as happens to be bald, and made out I was forging a bolt with my fist for a hammer. The mate with a bald head happened to be reading as well, and, not expecting what I was going to do, slipped off his seat and knocked Carrots over with him, and they both lay sprawling. Just then the ship gave a plunge, and some of us, with laughing, tumbled on top of them. The bald-headed chap—you won’t know him; we call him Tim—took it all right, but Carrots was upset about it. He sulked all night; but he’s all right again now. He says this is no time for such soft work, though: when we never know what’s going to happen, them Germans being looking out for us with faster ships and better guns, as some of our chaps say.

"But I'm not worrying. It's no use. Our admiral is the finest gentleman that ever drew breath, and he doesn't seem a bit afraid. It won't be his fault if we don't knock the Germans into a cocked hat. I don't reckon as ships and guns are everything. Men count more than aught else; and every one of our fellows will be game to the last."

Before the letter reached me Tom's confident, happy spirit knew this world no more. The end, in preparation for which all had seemed "to be turning religious," had come. We know not whether it found Tom in playful or serious vein. But we know that the Father who made him and understood him perfectly would recognise the nature He had given: and so, all is well.

The employment followed by Carrots was responsible for a visit he paid to the Police Court to gain my acquaintanceship. He hawked fruit with a handcart, and sometimes took a stand where bye-laws declared he had no business to stand. Hence he appeared to say that he had nothing to say, and was ordered to pay ten shillings for his indiscretion.

There is nothing really attractive that I have ever been able to see about the life of a street-barrow hawker. It involves a considerable amount of hard work, pushing a loaded barrow uphill; and it demands considerable business acumen to purchase fruit at remunerative prices, taking a year all round. The necessity for combining love of hard work with business ability if success is to be won by hawking perishable goods on handcarts is frequently overlooked, and money is wasted by charitably disposed people who allow themselves to be persuaded

that any man can get a living in that way if only he be provided with the means of purchasing a start. A man may be hard-working, but a poor buyer. In that case he will assuredly fail for all his hard work. Again, he may be a capital buyer, but lack the energy necessary to dispose of his goods when bought; and then his business acumen will be of small service.

Carrots was irreproachable in the matter of industry, but was nothing to boast about as regards business capacity. He honestly felt that unless he were allowed to stand in the proscribed area he could not make a living. It was useless to point out that others could manage while observing bye-laws. He was himself, not others; and he knew his own limitations only too well. I might have set to work to gain for him the friendly interest of a capable fruit merchant had he been older, or had there seemed to be any other good reason why he should continue to follow that occupation. I chance to have an unconquerable aversion to that kind of life for a strong, healthy young man of average character and ability. I prefer to see such a one in employment which offers better promise. That is at best but an uncertain and hand-to-mouth sort of existence as a rule; though it is true that spasmodic weeks occur when profits are large. I will say nothing of grave moral dangers which beset young persons engaged in the business.

The trouble I find in getting young fellows to exchange street-hawking for a more satisfactory means of livelihood is that when they have followed a free and easy sort of calling from boyhood they have usually acquired distaste for employment under any form of discipline. Here was my trouble in dealing with Carrots. I got him a situation as an ironmonger's porter. He

had to wheel a barrow about the streets as before. There was little difference in the nature of his work. But he hated the regular hours day by day. He missed his former freedom to begin when he liked and leave off when he liked. The fact that he was relieved of all anxiety as to ability to pay his way at the week-end, important as it was, failed to compensate for deprivation of the sweets of liberty. He gave the job up after enduring a month.

Meanwhile I had become acquainted with his home and family. He was the eldest of nine children. His father was a labourer in a timber-yard; his mother, an active, tidy little woman of forty, kept a neat and clean cottage in a rather squalid court. The struggle to feed a rapidly increasing family was perhaps responsible for Carrots picking up the sort of livelihood I found him following. A neighbour, who himself gained a living by hawking fruit, gave Carrots a start in that line at thirteen years old, and he had continued therein.

When I called at the house the father was at home lying on a sofa, looking exceedingly ill. I was told he had been off work four weeks. He was in no sick club. The fact that the mid-day meal of the family consisted of a loaf of bread and a halfpenny worth of dripping showed that the extreme limit of poverty had been reached. The tidy home, fairly comfortably furnished, and the clean, well-cared-for appearance of six children of school age, caused me to feel that out-relief under the Poor Law would be available to assist in supporting the family—were the husband to enter the workhouse hospital for treatment, which he seemed to badly need. Accordingly I asked him if he would consent to take that course if I arranged preliminaries. He looked at me doubtfully instead

of replying, and I urged the impossibility of obtaining proper support for himself and food for the children as things were. By going to the hospital he would increase the swiftness of his own recovery by enjoying the peace of mind he would have in feeling that his family was being adequately provided for, to say nothing of the benefits he would derive from skilful medical care.

I thought the man's reluctance to accept my suggestion to be due to a not uncommon spirit of independence by all means to be encouraged save when the health of a wage-earner and the proper feeding of children are in question. I was wrong. He knew his family to be ineligible for outdoor relief.

"I'll wait till to-morrow," he said at last, "and see how I feel then. If I'm not any better, I'll go into the hospital."

"But," I persisted, "why wait till to-morrow? Why not go to-day? Your children ought to have better food than they are getting, and you'll only grow worse yourself unless you get medicine and good support. Go this afternoon like a sensible fellow."

He looked helplessly towards the woman. She told the children to go out and play. Then she shut the door and said, frankly and sadly—

"It's no use deceiving you, sir; you see it's like this—it's never been our luck to get married."

There was the explanation. The woman was the mother of nine illegitimate children. Poor Law relief for her and for them could only be obtained by breaking up the home and entering the workhouse as indoor paupers. True, the children of school age would be admitted to admirable cottage homes provided by the Guardians, but the mother would be parted from them.

I enquired how it had come about that the couple had lived so long together unmarried; how long they had occupied their present home; what the woman meant when she spoke of their luck. I was told that they began to live together just before Carrots was born, twenty years earlier; that they took up their dwelling then in that very house, and that they had never possessed the means they thought essential to enable them to marry. The latter idea was, of course, miserably mistaken. The vicar of the parish most willingly married the couple quietly and without fee three weeks later, and most grateful they were for that small act of generosity. It is all but incredible that, willing to marry, they should have remained living so long in fornication. I wish it were an isolated case in my experience. It is very disconcerting to realise that people can live twenty years in a parish without their ignorant notions being dispelled and their willingness to conform to the reasonable demands alike of religion and convention being taken advantage of.

The marriage came about too late, of course, to legitimise the children. For them in the eyes of the Poor Law the disqualification must remain. As before their parents' marriage, so afterwards, it was necessary, when the father was ill, to give a little help to keep the home together and to secure sufficient food for the family through other channels.

The share I had in assisting to tide the family over difficult times cemented my influence over Carrots until at twenty-one years old, during a period when work was difficult to obtain ashore, he consented to follow Tom's example in accompanying me to a recruiting office, where, like Tom, he speedily satisfied the sergeant that he was a fit and proper person to serve as a stoker in His Majesty's Navy.

It was not long before he fell into Tom's company, being drafted for service in the *Good Hope* about the middle of the year 1913, when Tom had served on the cruiser some four years. In the meantime Carrots had developed a great liking for the sea, and had become the chief support of his mother since his father's death in 1907. For four years after that event—until the youngest child was able to work—he spared the greater portion of his pay to see the family free from want. It was then possible for him to somewhat diminish his contributions, but until his mother died two months after he went aboard the *Good Hope* he made her a most liberal allowance. His last letter to me is characteristic of his strong affection for his brothers and sisters:

"I heard from Frank that he's fond of the Army," he says, "and Ben and Arthur seem all right in France with the Territorials. I wish I could see them. But if we don't meet again here, we shall in a better place. Lizzie and Jane seem to miss their husbands a good deal; but I'm glad they didn't marry men without pluck enough to fight for their country. I'm sending them a trifle to buy something for the children: I hope their fathers will come back safe. I'm glad you got Johnny into the Navy. Fanny and Katie tell me what good places they've got, and how comfortable they are. I'm sure I don't know how to thank you for what you've done for us all."

It is easy to help those willing to help themselves. Carrots and his brothers and sisters were largely the architects of their own fortunes. They had no more to thank me for than the fact that I acted as adviser, suggesting courses they had the sense to adopt to their own wellbeing.

"And now," he goes on, "you'll like to know

how we're doing here. There isn't much to say. We just carry on from day to day. Some of our fellows say that we're in for it. We've heard that two big German cruisers are crossing the Pacific to have a go at us, and we're looking out for them as well as protecting our commerce from attack by smaller cruisers that are about. I was glad to get the Testament, which I read very often. Tom is as full of fun as ever. He's a good sort. There isn't a more popular man in the ship. We have our bits of tiffs now and then, but we're a happy family, taken all round. We're ready for whatever comes."

No doubt they were. Within a month of the writing of that letter the *Good Hope*, with the *Monmouth* and *Glasgow*, came up with the enemy cruisers *Scharnhorst*, *Gneisenau*, *Leipzig*, and *Dresden*. The British ships were outclassed. Under their gallant and beloved commander, Rear-Admiral Sir Christopher Cradock, British seamen did all that men could do. But the *Good Hope* and *Monmouth* went down on November 1st with all hands. Although the sea was by no means bad, the enemy, to his eternal disgrace, made no attempt to save the English sailors struggling in the water.

So ended the premonitions evident in both the letters I have quoted. Probably the seamen were well aware of the inferiority of their ships in artillery and speed. Perhaps they looked to make up for that by their own individual superiority, and by the skill of their commander. The engagement proved that the day has gone for ever when ships with poor artillery, low speed, and presenting a big target, however cleverly handled and gallantly manned, can successfully try conclusions with ships of higher steaming powers and vastly better armed. But the quality of our seamen was

seen to remain the same. Admiral Cradock took with him the hundreds he had led in action to a rest bravely won—"a happy family," ready for whatever came.

The *Glasgow* escaped in a battered condition. It was necessary to shore up decks with timber struts. The spirit of her crew was revealed by a discovery made by an officer finding his way among the props next morning. On one of the struts he found chalked: "Epping Forest, no Germans admitted on any pretence."

Aboard the *Glasgow* was a youth named Philip who wandered from London to this city about four years ago, and being found about the streets without visible means of support was locked up for his own safety. He was handed over to me next morning. I returned him to his parents, who seemed quite estimable folk. But he came back here again six months later with a few shillings in his pocket, begging me to find him work on a ship. Preposterous as the notion seemed, he was under the impression that this city, seventy miles inland, is a seaport; and when the whole truth was told, it turned out that he had come from London twice to find a ship here.

He found a shipping agent in the person of a recruiting officer who considered him a suitable candidate for the Royal Navy. His instinct had led him aright in choosing the sea. The letters I received from him at long intervals were always cheerful. His description of the fight off the Falkland Island which saw Cradock avenged is as follows:—

"We hadn't much to do at first. We had to keep with the *Invincible* and *Inflexible*, which began to fire when the Germans were ten miles off. We could do nothing at that range, but the big cruisers gave the beggars

beans, and in about half an hour three of the enemy ships, the *Leipzig*, *Nürnberg*, and *Dresden*, made a bolt for it, leaving their big cruisers, the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*, to fight it out with our two new ships. Admiral Sturdee thought he could manage without us. So he sent the *Glasgow* with the *Kent* and *Cornwall* to have a go at these little beggars which were more our own size, while the *Invincible* and *Inflexible* cooked the big German cruisers' goose. By what I hear, that took about five hours from the moment of opening fire. It was a running fight, the enemy doing his level best to get away, steaming four-and-twenty knots an hour or thereabouts, racing like the devil. He had found more than he bargained for and was sorry he came out.

"We didn't see this finish, having to attend to our own little show. We went in chase of the *Dresden*, *Nürnberg*, and *Leipzig*, the *Dresden* leading. We drew ahead of the *Cornwall* and *Kent*, and began to get a few shots at the *Leipzig* at about seven miles. We wanted to make the beggar alter her course so as the *Cornwall* and *Kent*, slower boats than the *Glasgow*, might get a look in. The *Cornwall* joined in our fire, and we both raked the *Leipzig* till she was ablaze fore and aft. She went down about nine o'clock. She made a good run for it, but we couldn't bear the idea of parting with her without knowing where she'd gone. The worst of it was, we didn't know for a while what had become of the *Nürnberg* and *Dresden*. We had been forced to let them go when they deserted their consort. We looked about for them when we'd finished with her, and we heard at last that the *Kent* had settled accounts with the *Nürnberg*, but the *Dresden* had contrived to

slip away. She won't be away long. When I write again I'll tell you what we've done with her, and where we've left her.

"Reading my letter over, I'm not a bit satisfied. I should like to tell you what the *Leipzig* looked like afire, and as she went down, but I'm not scholar enough. It was about dark—just after nine o'clock at night. I had got in a boat to go and help to bring off some of her crew, for we could see she was doomed. The captain sang out 'It's no good lads, she's going'; and we all stood up and looked at the blazing ship. She was just like a great tar-barrel alight. We stood there as still as mice and stared, thinking of the poor devils aboard. They died game. But they hadn't managed to do us much harm. A goodish few of their shells hit us, but we weren't a penny the worse. We hadn't blenched when the Germans beat us with their faster ships and bigger guns five weeks before. We knew our turn would come. When it did come we beat them in two ways. We sunk their ship, and we saved as many of the crew as we could. We weren't so set up with our victory, or so mad with hate, as not to admire the good show the enemy put up; and we were real sorry that we only picked up seven of their officers and eleven of their men. The crew stayed in that burning hell too long. Most of them were dead men before the ship went down."

Another letter reached me by the same post as the last. It was from one Curly, who served aboard the *Kent*. Curly wore his hair in ringlets when I saw him first some fifteen years ago, being then nine years old, and accused of warehouse-breaking. He had a strong fancy for oranges, and

had been persuaded by older lads to go through a small window and open the door of a shed in which boxes of tempting fruit were stored. When I met him six years later charged with making a slide on a footpath, his ringlets were gone, but his head was covered with short, thick curls of luxuriant black hair. His name was then Elias. The name of Curly was bestowed upon him later, when, his nearest approaches to crime being as stated, I thought well to assist in humouring his taste for life at sea.

The world is notoriously but a small place. I lately called on Curly's mother, to discover that she was a native of the same village in which I was born. An aunt of hers, who chanced to be staying with her for a few days, owned me as my father's son; and I discovered in his family another link with the lad in whom I had sought to show interest.

I well remember an occasion when, taking a message to the vicarage of that old-world place, I found the vicar in the yard talking with an old stone-mason, grandfather of Curly, whose real name came to him as a legacy from that worthy. The vicar was a clergyman of the old school who felt himself responsible both for the bodily and spiritual welfare of his flock. He was to be found presiding at club-dinners and all manner of social functions. He went out of his way to render all kinds of services to everybody. Was a boy desirous of securing employment with a railway company; did he hanker after joining Navy or Army; had he applied for a post as page or stable-lad?—the vicar was ready to advise and help in every possible way. Was trade bad; were many parishioners short of employment?—his purse was open, and his brain alert to find temporary relief work on his glebe. But he was a high old Tory who did things in his own style. He greatly

disliked interference, was something of an autocrat, and no lover of new-fangled ways in Church or State. He was no teetotaller. Any respectable parishioner calling at the vicarage was sure of an invitation to partake of a jug of light beer. With most people he was deservedly popular. There were those, of course, who differed from him on political matters, and with these he was ever at variance. But a few of his opponents concealed their opinions so as to retain a sort of claim to the vicar's beer, and because of an utterly false notion that such concealment was necessary to retain his patronage of their various trades.

The stone-mason was among these. When out of a job he looked confidently for the vicar to find him something to do; and he well knew how to make that something last until a piece of work elsewhere had been secured. He was probably opening negotiations for employment when I found him in the vicar's company that afternoon. Unfortunately he had spent the morning at various public-houses, and was in a state which enabled the vicar's beer to complete the unloosing of a tongue customarily given to silence in the parson's presence.

"Ah," he said, as I stood timidly by, seeking vainly to attract the vicar's attention, "I should be about seventeen when I marched with the Chartists from Nottingham to Mansfield. I wor as hot as any on 'em. We meant business as well. We had some fun. And if we could only have got our way we should have made the world worth living in. I well remember that march. It wor grand. It blowed hard; and it rained cats and dogs; and in some lanes you went up to your knees in mud. I carried a banner with a grand motto on it—some'at like a motto. It wor, 'More Pigs and Less Parsons!'"

Young as I was I was astounded at the stone-

mason's temerity in telling such a tale in coarse, disrespectful, uncouth tones he would not have adopted had he been quite sober. I distinctly remember feeling that he had gone too far.

But the vicar only laughed heartily, and replied—

"Oh, I see, Elias, more like you and less like me," walking off, still hugely enjoying the joke, and leaving Elias to remark to the vicarage gardener—

"He's licked me again. He got one in there. He's knocked all the wind out of me! I must mind what I'm saying next time."

Strange changes happen in a couple of generations. Elias the grandfather marched under a separatist banner in a fight waged to set class against class. Elias the grandson has fought like a hero under the grand old flag which unites all Britons worthy of the name at a time when Imperial cohesion and steadfastness are imperative, and hopes so to fight again. His grandfather's muddle-headed pride in the insane motto of the banner he bore looks uncommonly foolish when compared with his own deep reverence for the Union Jack. Taking up the story of the chase of the *Nürnberg* where Philip leaves off, he says:—

"Somewhere about four in the afternoon of December 8th we got orders from the *Cornwall* to catch up with the *Nürnberg* and engage her. She had rather a long start and was fairly fast. The captain could see we had all our work cut out, so he gave orders to stoke up to the last ounce. We hadn't too much coal, so the captain said, 'All right, then, have a go at the boats.' We did; then we collected every bit of wood in the ship we could lay our hands on, doors, ladders, chairs, tables, chests of drawers—every blooming thing made of timber you can mention—and broke them up, smeared them with oil, and shoved them into

the furnaces. Didn't we make the old *Kent* go! In about an hour we drew within range. We let go with a will, and our gunners made some fine hits. In an hour and a half the *Nürnberg* was on fire forward and ceased firing. We ceased too, and closed. She didn't haul down her colours, so at 3000 yards or so we opened fire again, and in two or three minutes she struck her flag. We did all we could to save life when the ship went down about three-quarters of an hour later, but the Germans for the most part refused to leave their ship. We picked up twelve men, but five of them died.

"We had four killed and twelve wounded on the *Kent*—almost all by a single shell. We should have had more casualties; very likely we should have all been blown up if it had not been for one of our men, Sergeant Mayes. A shell which burst set fire to some cordite charges in the casemate, and the flames flashed down into the ammunition passage. Thinking nothing of the risk he ran, the sergeant picked up the burning cordite and threw it into the sea. Then he laid hold of the hose-pipe and flooded the place, putting out a fire that had set some empty shell-bags alight. It doesn't sound much, but it was a brave thing to do all the same. Very likely it saved the ship.

"The old *Kent* looked a bit of a rake when the fight was done. All the furniture was burnt up, and the flag the Kentish ladies worked for their county cruiser was torn to tatters with shell fire. We gathered the ribbons up as well as we could. I believe they are to be returned to the ladies of Kent.

"You've no idea how fond a sailor grows of his flag. It will take us some time to get to

like the one we've run up in its place half as well as the old one. But of course it's what the flag means that counts. When I look at the Union Jack I always think of our women-folk nursing, and knitting, and stitching, and working, and of our men in the mine, and forge, and mill, as well as on the ocean and the battlefield. We all seem to be one—helping one another, fond of one another, and praying for one another. The Union Jack is the grandest flag that floats. God bless everybody it protects; and may it wave triumphant while the world lasts."

In a later letter Curly says that the ladies of Kent have promised another flag, and that the brave sergeant is to receive the Victoria Cross for so gallantly risking his life to save the ship. He also tells of the *Dresden* hunted down and destroyed at last, and the seas cleared of all German craft save the submarines which ply their pirate trade in our home waters. With a lofty conception of patriotism that his grandfather could never have understood, Curly thirsts for new opportunities of helping to maintain inviolate that freedom we have inherited from the distant past. It is inspiring to observe his disdain for the merciless, barbarous, haughty tyrant who had dared to challenge Britain to mortal combat. And so long as the union of a nation in heart and purpose he sees typified in the Union Jack is a living thing, none need be afraid. Our flag will float "triumphant while the world lasts."

When the census of 1901 was being taken I had a visitor who called to enquire—

"Will you give me a bit of advice, master?"

Understanding that I was at his service, he began—

"We've had a fellow at our house with a great long paper, full of questions of all sorts you can mention. He's left it. Our missus says he's told her I've got to fill it up. Now what I want to know is, have I got to do it? I've been arguing with my mates about it at the shop. Some says I have, and some says I haven't. I say as I can please myself. But I've told 'em as I'd come and ask you. I said as you're looking after our Samuel."

I did not like my visitor being so anxious for his mates to know that he had been brought into touch with me through the misdeeds of another. It is curious how sensitive one grows. I felt quite hurt that I could only be owned as Samuel's protector. Why couldn't the man pass me off as his own friend? He was as touchy as those persons who, pleading for leniency from the Bench, whine, "I've never been in a place like this before." As if there was anything wrong with the place! It is what they appear there as that matters. It is scarcely pleasant to be told that people feel it necessary to explain how they come to know you because you go to a Police Court now and then. However, I looked over the matter, and told the man he had better fill the census paper to the best of his ability.

"What," he said, "am I forced to do that? Have I got to answer all them there questions? Why, there's about three hundred of 'em. I can't do it if I sit up all night. I'm not scholar enough to do ought of the sort. Besides, there's no sense in it. Now, it's a straight question, master, Am I forced to fill that blooming thing up?"

I told him he was. There was nothing to worry about. He could easily do it.

"Easy do it," he replied scornfully, "easy do it: I don't think. Have you ever seen one of them papers, master? They want to know how old I am, and our missus; and Samuel and Charlie; and

Sarah and Betty; and Dick and Willie; and Fanny and Clara; and all the boiling of us. They want to know what I do; and our missus; and all the kids; and I reckon whether the parrot can talk; and whether the cat and dog's on speaking terms. You never saw such a paper in your life! How many rooms in the house? Do you keep pigeons in your attic? Are you troubled with mice, or rats, or blacklocks? Do you get much cream on your milk? Are you satisfied with your knocker-up? Do you buy English meat or foreign? There's many a hundred soft questions like them."

His description of the census paper was scarcely accurate, but that was not the point. I insisted that he must fill it up to the best of his ability.

"Well, you surprise me, master," he said; "I told 'em at our shop you had a bit of sense. Fill that thing up! Not me; I'll see 'em hanged first. What right have they to come and order a man to do aught like that for no pay? I shan't touch the blooming thing. There's no sense nor reason about it. And then they say this is a free country!"

He went off in a rage. By all I hear the census enumerator for his district filled in the return himself from information supplied by the objector's wife, and my visitor was able to boast that he had set the authorities at defiance. I do not blame the census enumerator. I think his action proved him to be a man of good sense. The incident is given to show what an intelligent person Samuel's father was, and how surprising a thing it is that the youth should err a hair's-breadth from the right way when he had always so wise and lofty an example before him at home.

Samuel was said by his father to be a cantankerous lad. Perhaps he was; and as, proverbially, two of a sort seldom get on together, perhaps that was how it came about that the boy was anxious to

leave home when old enough to enter the Navy. His mother was a quiet, easy-going, good-tempered person, who looked after her large family admirably. She took a philosophic view of Samuel's determination. He would leave home some time, she supposed. He would be thinking of marrying in a few years. It was only a matter of parting with him a little early. Evidently in her judgment the perils of matrimony and the sea were about the same.

There was no blemish worth considering in the lad's character. A foolish act in discharging a loaded revolver in the street, fortunately without doing hurt to anybody, brought him under my notice. He had accumulated pocket-money to purchase the weapon, and true to instincts inherited from his father, had felt himself entitled to shoot anywhere. The case looked all the more serious because he had seen fit to attempt to resist the constable who sought to prevent him from repeating his dangerous act. Nearly two years' instruction under a master who took care that he spent his working hours well, while engaging his spare time in the study of electrical engineering, cured Samuel of a tendency to foolhardiness. He joined the Navy when sixteen, and could not possibly have made better progress, being a petty officer on a cruiser when the war broke out.

He spent the winter somewhere in the North Sea with the Grand Fleet, usefully if noiselessly assisting to close the war by stifling the enemy's commerce. His rare letters show a little impatience. He longs for more of that active work of which he has enjoyed but one brief taste. Yet his one engagement with the enemy marks him as more fortunate than the majority of the men of the Grand Fleet, whose lot has been to serve through weary months of patient waiting un-

relieved by a glimpse of anything in the shape of an enemy warship save an occasional submarine easily driven off or destroyed.

It was Samuel's good fortune on the 24th January 1915 to take part in administering punishment to the baby-killing raiders of Scarborough, Whitby, and the Hartlepoons. He was a member of the crew of one of the battle-cruisers engaged with light cruisers and destroyers in patrolling the North Sea, when at 7.25 on that Sunday morning the flash of guns was noticed to the south-south-east. Shortly afterwards the cruiser *Aurora* reported to Vice-Admiral Sir David Beatty that she was engaged with enemy ships. Preparations were at once made to intercept the Germans, who were rightly judged to be attempting a further raid. Reports from scouting craft gave the enemy's strength as three battle-cruisers, the *Blücher*, six light cruisers, and a number of destroyers. The British fleet was composed of the battle-cruisers *Lion*, *Tiger*, *Princess Royal*, *New Zealand*, and *Indomitable*, the light cruisers *Southampton*, *Nottingham*, *Birmingham*, *Lowestoft*, *Arethusa*, *Aurora*, and *Undaunted*, and destroyer flotillas.

Samuel tells of the engagement in a letter as follows:—

“It would be about half-past seven when we sighted the German ships. They had turned tail and were racing for home like the very devil. We had to work up steam for all we were worth. We got a lot more speed out of the engines than ever they were designed for; and they were intended to move things, I can tell you, sir. The end of it was that the enemy could not get away fast enough. By nine o'clock our battle-cruisers were giving it them hot. Before ten their leading ship was on fire. No sooner had we noticed that

than we saw that the third ship in their line was on fire as well. The *Blücher*, which brought up their rear, was showing that she had about finished by now; which was not to be wondered at, as she had been a target for all our battle-cruisers in turn.

"We thought we had the whole lot; but the German destroyers—between their big ships and ours of course—began to belch out thick clouds of black smoke to screen their battle-cruisers, which were altering their course to the northward so as to have a better chance of escaping us. Their submarines began to get busy about now, but we quickly beat them off. A chance shot put the *Lion* out of action at about eleven o'clock, which was a pity, for it took Admiral Beatty out of the fight. Meanwhile we peppered away at the *Blücher*, which sank before noon. We saved two hundred and fifty of her crew while a Zeppelin and a seaplane dropped bombs on our men.

"The rest of the ships, except a small cruiser, got back home, but the three battle-cruisers were all on fire when we saw them last. They entered a mine-field where it would have been foolhardy for us to follow; that was how they got away. They had been taught a lesson, though, I know. It will be a surprise to me if they shell any more of our coast towns for a good while to come. When they are ready for another go, we are; and we hope they won't be in such a confounded hurry to get home again next time. There would have been no fight at all if we had not fairly made them have a go. We were never nearer to them than seven miles except in the case of the poor old *Blücher*. Of course they were wise to run away, but then you do expect a

bit more pluck, even in Germans, than it takes to come out to kill babies. They might have a try at better game when they have a chance. I hope they will buck up soon. If it's true how grand a thing education is in Germany, they are sure to have something like we had in our copy-books at school, 'If at first you don't succeed, try, try again.' We are waiting for them to live up to some such motto."

The British Navy is still waiting. Perhaps the patience of our sailors may soon find reward. The Germans know what they are about. They will strike when they judge the opportunity to be favourable. When that day comes they will find all our seamen ready, like Samuel.

It is a far cry from the North Sea to the Dardanelles, where another of my friends serves on a cruiser engaged in the difficult operations there. His father being called George, it was held absolutely necessary that he should take that name when he entered this life, the first boy born to his parents. But his mother had an uncle, a bachelor, "with a nice bit of money." It was reckoned wise to court the uncle's favour in naming the child. The uncle's name was Robert. For a few anxious days it was uncertain whether reverence for family tradition or lust of gold would prevail. Happily a compromise was struck by giving the child both names. There was a good deal of difficulty experienced in deciding which should come first. Robert George sounded awkward, the father said; the mother declared that George Robert sounded "awkwarder." However, George Robert was the name the mother herself gave to the clergyman when she took the infant to the font, and the clergyman took her at her word. It was impossible for him to know, as the

good woman afterwards insisted, that she had become so muddled by all the wrangling as to give the names in the wrong order. She did not mention any mistake when the entry was made in the register. Perhaps she regarded it as not worth while. It is unfortunate that the registrar of births and deaths has the name recorded as Robert George. The father was to blame for that. He says that it had been decided against his will, and he knew it was no use saying anything when he gave the names in that order in registering the birth. His wife says, on the other hand, that he went out of the house to visit the registrar "determined to have his own stupid way." The fact remains that at the registrar's office he is Robert George, and in the parochial register, George Robert. Since his mother calls him, "our George Robert," and his father, "our George," it would appear that the combination given to the clergyman as his name was the real choice of a mother who loves to play at cross-purposes. After all the anxiety and trouble, it is regrettable to record that the uncle "married a young lass and had a houseful of kids of his own, so that nobody else got a look in when he died."

In 1901, George Robert's father, who not infrequently passed the bounds of sobriety, was one evening found by the police attempting to unlock the door of a post office pillar-box, under the impression that he had reached his own door about half a mile distant. Being quite unable to give an account of himself or of the place where he would be, he was provided with accommodation in a cell until a few hours later he became sufficiently sober to send a message to his wife, who kindly visited the police office, deposited the money required as security for his appearance before the Court to answer a charge of drunkenness, and bore him home, soundly rating him as they went. His

offence was expiated by the payment of twelve shillings and sixpence so far as the Court was concerned. So far as his wife is concerned it is scarcely expiated yet. The poor man has never been before a Court since, although his wife declares he has been lucky. For years his circumspection in departing homewards when he had consumed as much liquor as he could carry was only rewarded by his wife's persistent declarations that his "guzzling ways" would be getting him into trouble again, and that when that happened he would remain in "the lock-up" all night for any effort she would make to liberate him.

I had frequently visited the man to try to get him to give up the use of intoxicants, and had come to know George Robert fairly well in consequence, when the said George Robert took it into his head to keep his twenty-first birthday by himself getting drunk. Further, he used much bad language while intoxicated, making himself a nuisance to many persons passing along a crowded thoroughfare. He was duly charged with being drunk and using obscene language in a certain part of the city, and had nothing to say in reply.

The case was taken before a magistrate of great experience and caustic humour. Glancing at the well-dressed, intelligent-looking young fellow in the dock, he remarked—

"It seems a pity you can't find a better way of spending your Sundays than getting drunk, and using nasty language in the streets."

The defendant murmured that he agreed, and the magistrate proceeded—

"Why can't you behave like a respectable, decent person? How is it you don't pull up and conduct yourself properly?"

"I'll try, sir," George Robert said, feebly but with evident sincerity of purpose.

"Do," the magistrate urged; "get a penny-worth of paper next Saturday, and if you can't find a better way of spending Sunday, write out a few clean words and copy them a few hundred times. Then, if in future you must get drunk, you'll have something to fall back on. And perhaps you'll manage to get along without offending people's ears with filthy and disgusting talk."

This excellent advice was delivered in a calm, deliberate, friendly tone. It went right home. The young fellow withered under the shame induced by its merciless exhibition of his folly. It is not usually a desirable thing, in my judgment, for magistrates to deliver homilies from the Bench. The average justice is unequal to the task of selecting defendants likely to benefit, even where he has the rare ability to give effective advice publicly to individuals. Only an exceptional person here and there can usefully reprove another when a third person is present. It is far better for most of us to tell a man "his fault between thee and him alone." Where a man is not too callous to profit by any reproof, he is mostly hurt at being censured publicly. For the same reason that a wise teacher prefers to deal with a refractory pupil by requesting him to remain alone when his fellows have left the class-room, it is advisable that efforts to induce a grown person to alter his ways should generally be made privately.

The same may be said even more emphatically of efforts on the part of the Bench to publicly commiserate with defendants, and to enter into discussions as to their future prospects. Few defendants worth helping are mentally capable of profiting by advice, however kind and well-meant, under such conditions. It is the expert rogue who carries off the honours here. He has no nerves to speak of, and experience has taught him to love

the type of magistrate given to offering a friendly hand in public. He will express any amount of sorrow, any number of excuses, and give promises of satisfactory future conduct by the score. He realises that it is impossible for the Bench to hurt him if he can but sustain his part. There is often something ludicrous in the expression upon magistrates' faces when the police silently produce the records of men who have all but convinced a Court that they are the most innocent and unfortunate of mortals. I am satisfied that all attempts to help persons back to the path of integrity, whether by advice, reproof, or financial assistance, are best conducted behind the scenes in all but very exceptional cases.

George Robert's case was highly exceptional, inasmuch as it was a matter for legitimate scorn that he should appear on such a charge, a young man, evidently capable of better things. Only a minute was occupied by the magistrate's advice. Possibly a hundred cases were taken before that magistrate offered advice again. That is to my mind a golden rule to be observed. To get into the way of feeling that every defendant must be treated to a discourse is to do nothing profitable, and to waste energy and the time of the Court.

After George Robert had paid the fine imposed, I saw him privately and expressed regret that all the misery he had seen wrought by alcoholic excess in his own home had failed to induce him to forswear intoxicants for ever.

"Have you a pledge-card?" he asked in reply.

I produced one; he signed it. "There," he said, "I've had the last drop of drink that'll ever pass through my lips if I live to be as old as Methuselah. Did you hear what that gentleman (the magistrate) said to me?"

I intimated that I did.

"Well," he went on, "it's the thickest bit I've

ever had to swallow in my life. 'A few clean words!' Why, it looks as if I knew nought but nasty talk. 'Get a pennyworth of paper, and write out a few clean words.' Well, it's come to something. Do you think he believes I'm as bad as all that?"

"What can he believe?" I asked. "You heard what the officer said of your language. You talked a good deal, apparently, but you seem to have simply repeated about six words, five of them foul."

Poor George was horrified. I never knew a man so thoroughly confounded at the recognition of his folly. His work was not endangered. He went to it that very afternoon. I was a little afraid that he would begin to take drink again on the excuse that the engine-room where he was employed was so hot. He stuck to his pledge, however, for two years, then called to tell me that he had given my name as a referee should enquiry be made about his character, since he was seeking to join the Royal Navy as an artificer.

There was no hitch at all. He has now completed eight years' exemplary service in the Navy, and has proved himself an invaluable hand at his work. True to his promise, he is able to boast that since receiving the advice that so burnt into his soul, no alcohol has passed through his lips.

Until a month ago I could not say the father had made and kept a similar resolution. I called at his home just five weeks since. It is a good, comfortable house in a quiet, prosperous artisan street.

It was baking-day. A hot fire burnt in the kitchen grate. Sprawling in front lay a huge retriever, and curled on its back was a fine tabby cat.

I remarked on the fact that the animals looked quite happy together, and the man informed me,

in accents thick with emotion or drink, "You'll often see that cat and dog like that. It's fair grand to see 'em, I say."

His wife flounced in, hot and in bad temper. "Can't you smell as the bread's burning?" she enquired; "you can do nought but guzzle. It's no use the master here bothering with you. You'll never be no better as long as you live."

She said a good deal more. He listened helplessly until she ceased. Then he enquired with delicious innocence—

"What's matter wi' thee, lass? Why can't we be like our cat and dog?"

To my mind they had lived a cat-and-dog life from the day that I knew them. They must have taken a vicious cat and dog as a pattern.

We got away from sordid domestic strife in beginning to discuss George Robert's recent letters from the Dardanelles, three of which his mother produced with much laudable pride. He serves on a great battleship and tells glowing tales of wonderful feats performed by her guns. I had not the heart to tell the mother that a more famous battleship was operating in those waters performing more wonderful feats still, with bigger guns. To that father and mother their own lad is the most remarkable person on the most remarkable ship in the Navy. It is a proper feeling. I suppose it is shared by a good many parents whose sons serve on a good many different ships.

"All I wish is that the war will soon be over, and he'll come back safe," this mother said.

The father looked very solemn. "What we've got to do," he declared, "is to behave ourselves, and do our best in every way, and to be worthy of such grand chaps as our lads are. We must let 'em see we've done our best to back 'em up."

I entirely agreed, and presented him with a pledge-card.

"I've never signed such a thing before," he said; "you've tried me often enough to know I haven't professed to hold wi' such things. But there's sense in what you say. Our George reckons nought to drink now, and it'll please him to know as I've knocked it off as well. So I'll sign, and have done with it for good and all. There's nought I won't do to show the lad I'm proud of him and anxious to please him. He deserves the best I can give him, and he shall have it."

The man has got over the critical period, having endured for a month. The example of their own virtuous cat and dog has been taken by the couple in exchange for the vicious pattern copied too long. "My word, won't our George Robert be pleased when he comes home," is his mother's comment. "Well, the least we can do is to make him happy when he does get back."

May that be the conviction of every one of us, looking for the day of our heroes' victorious return!

VI.

WITH THE AUSTRALASIAN FORCES.

ABOUT ten years ago I received a call from a man who had returned to England from Australia for a short holiday. He told me frankly that he was brought up in a home ruined by the drunken habits of both his parents. By the time he was twenty-one years old he was himself a heavy drinker. He had an illness which caused reflection. He resolved to have done with intoxicants. When the time came for his resolution to be put to the test he found himself unable to resist the temptation of joining old companions in old habits. He determined to emigrate to Australia and make a new start. In a fresh environment he chose companions of another sort, and formed entirely new habits. Year by year he steadily prospered until he became the owner of a flourishing business. He employed several men already, and could do with two more. His object in calling on me was to ask me to introduce him to two young fellows who, like himself when he was about their age, had given way to drinking habits, and who would welcome a change of environment such as might help them to attain to a better state of living. He named substantial wages for reasonable work; he was willing to advance the whole sum required to meet the expenses of emigration; he did not mind how confirmed the men selected might

appear in their drinking ways if only they were under twenty-five years old, were willing workers, honest, and possessed of enough good sense to sometimes wish they could better control their appetite for alcohol.

It was easy for me to arrange for him to meet several young men of the type required, and he selected the two worst drinkers. Percy had just celebrated his twenty-first birthday by appearing before the Bench for drunkenness for the seventeenth time; Herbert, aged twenty-two, had one conviction more recorded against him: both were continually signing and breaking pledges to abstain from intoxicants. They were willing to do better, but they were without power to do what they willed. Any public-house was sufficiently magnetic to draw them within its doors. Their resistance was of the feeblest, with this proviso: the magnet could only draw after working hours; no complaint had ever been made that they neglected their work for drink. On the contrary, their employers spoke of them as most industrious and regular workmen.

I had frequently endeavoured to assist them to make a better thing of life. I was quite aware that their homes were poor places in which to occupy spare time, untidy, noisy, comfortless; and there was much drinking both in their own and in adjoining houses. Still there seemed no good reason why they should have beaten all comers in their respective neighbourhoods in the distinction of prosecutions for drunkenness, and at so early an age. Besides, free libraries and parks, swimming baths, music-halls, and billiard saloons without licenses for sale of alcohol, offered counter-attractions to the public-house such as were not offered in their parents' youth. Why could they not choose companions among frequenters of these places of counter-attraction? What strange power of fascination had the patrons of public-houses for

them? I cannot tell. The fact remains that, in spite of all I could do, it was to these houses and these companions that Percy and Herbert continued to be attracted, notwithstanding my firm conviction that they really meant to abandon the use of intoxicants every time they signed the pledge.

The opening so unexpectedly offered seemed exactly to fit their case, but their appearance being the most hang-dog of all the candidates, I was pleasantly surprised at their selection. Their interviewer certainly justified his claim that he did not mind how confirmed in drinking habits they might seem. They filled the required conditions as touching honesty and industry, and were professedly anxious to get away from the thrall of drink. Terms mutually satisfactory to master and men were arranged. The master went to see friends in a distant town. The men went to tell the news to their companions, and to drink to the success of their enterprise. Percy and Herbert both appeared before the Court next day on the usual charge, paid the usual fine, made the customary profession of regret, and signed the customary pledge. I feared that this untoward event would cause the arrangement to be cancelled on the return of the principal party. However, he merely called them fools, and hurried preparations for their departure. They would find no opportunities for drinking in that part of Australia for which they were bound, he said. If they could pull up effectively while still in England, it was hardly worth while going to the trouble he was taking to endeavour to effect their reformation.

They were got aboard the liner with some difficulty. They had made the most of the excuse for excess afforded by their impending departure. Their pockets bulged with bottles containing re-

freshment, which their new master regarded as quite unnecessary. They were relieved of this superfluous luggage, which was cast into the sea. And they found no opportunity while on the liner to secure further supplies. Their new supervisor exercised a sharp and stern watch over them, and they developed a laudable affection for non-alcoholic beverages, supplied without stint throughout the voyage. By the time they landed in Australia, their treatment had produced the astonishing result that they found themselves able to pass a drink-shop without experiencing any really compelling desire to enter its doors. They were then taken to a district where it was impossible to obtain alcoholic liquors without journeying thirty miles.

It must be sadly admitted that early letters from Australia shown to me by their parents contained something very like a lament that a man there could "neither get a glass of ale nor one thing nor another." That was the only complaint. It did not last long. Making a virtue of necessity, they soon began to write as though they had been lifelong abstainers. When they were able to report themselves as possessing £50 apiece in a savings bank, they reached a high pitch in their denunciations of "fools what drink." From that, probably owing to the influence of their master, they got to a more practical means of combating folly by seeking to open the eyes and remedy the state of fools.

I was riding on a tram-car in the city where I work. It was a Sunday afternoon. The licensed premises had just closed. Five of the customers of a popular house ascended the upper deck of the car and occupied seats close to mine. None of the men were perceptibly the worse for drink. They

talked quite decently and rationally. They were obviously of the skilled type of working man, prosperous-looking in their respectable Sunday attire.

"I've often wondered what's become of Percy — and Herbert —!" one of them remarked (he used the surnames of the emigrants; it will be observed that, for reasons needing no explanation, few surnames are given in these records). "I haven't seen them for two or three years. Ah! it'll be all that since I came across them last in the 'Blue Bell'; and they used to be always there. I can't make out what's happened to them."

"You aren't likely to see them," answered one of his companions; "they both went to Australia two years last August, and they're getting on an' all. I was talking to Percy's father the other day, and he tells me Percy's saved nearly a hundred pounds. He's been teetotal ever since he went out there, and Herbert as well. They're both saving money as fast as they can."

"However in the world could Percy and Herbert turn teetotal?" enquired another of the men; "that chap at the Police Court (myself) got both of 'em to sign the pledge half a dozen times to my knowledge, and he talked to 'em like a man, but it was no good. They'd be drunk again always the same night."

"Oh, it's getting out to a new country; that's what's done it," confidently suggested a fourth.

Then the fifth man spoke: "There's something besides that," he said; "getting out to a new country isn't enough by itself. Now, suppose I went to London and knew nobody, I should soon get tired of walking about the streets and seeing the sights, and I should drop into a public-house quite natural, like. If I went there and met somebody I knew, and he was one of my sort, we should both walk about till we felt we could do with a drink, and then we should drop into a pub

together. But if I went to London and met a chap that cared nought about pubs, we should look round for a full day, and see all there was to see; and if he was a right sort, we should go and get good meals as we wanted them in nice places, and I should come home without having had a glass, and without having bothered much about it. I know that's what happens, because I've been through it. I've been there myself; I've been and met such another chap as I am; and I've been and met old Arthur Twist, and you know what he's like. I walked many a mile with him, and we saw about everything, and we'd a slap-up dinner at dinner-time, and tea at tea-time, and supper before my train left; and I never thought about a glass of beer till I was half-way home. It's not a new country that does the trick. A man can go to a new country and find nobody to care about him, and then he'll find a drink-shop if he's that way inclined. Or he can go to a new country and find pals who'll take him on the drink, prohibition or no prohibition; and if he finds pals like that, he'll drink there just as much as he would at home. But if he finds pals who don't drink, and who let him see they reckon nothing to those who do, but who take him their way and show him how to enjoy himself without ale, ten to one he'll take to their way just like a duck takes to water."

"Aye, there's sense in that," the rest agreed unanimously.

"But," the man who had spoken first continued, "it's funny how men seem to light on folk there who lead 'em away from wrong pals oftener than they do here. I can't make that out."

"Well," rejoined the man who had told of his visits to London, "I don't know as I can either. But I've an idea there's nought like loneliness to make a man value society, though; and I think when a chap goes out to a strange place he's right

thankful for somebody to notice him, and he'll do a lot to keep the good opinion of anybody who does notice him and take an interest in him.

"From what they tell me, now, folk in Canada, and Australia, and New Zealand—anywhere where it's a bit lonely—make quite a fuss of any stranger who goes among them. They invite him to their houses, and to concerts and games and things, and, if he's any sense, he doesn't want to let himself down. So if he is a bit of a drinker and they aren't, he's ashamed of himself, and he gives it up, knowing as it won't fit in, like, with their ideas.

"Of course, if a chap gets among drinkers, he'll do worse than he did here, because he'll mix with a worse lot—regular out-and-out rotters, and thieves, and spongers. I shouldn't wonder if that isn't why decent folk in those places open their houses to young fellows who go as strangers there. They'll know what they're like to come to if somebody doesn't look after them a bit."

I was sorry when, having got as far as this, the speaker left the car. I found his ideas interesting and instructive. I do not remember having heard them put so convincingly before—certainly not by any drinker. There were many points upon which I should have liked his opinion, but which he had not touched. As it chanced, I was soon to meet him again. Meanwhile his companions went a little further on the car. Before all dismounted, the man who had opened the conversation by expressing wonder as to the whereabouts of Percy and Herbert made the following remarkable declaration:—

"I wish somebody would offer all of us a chance in a new country. It's a soft game we're playing here. We all know there's no sense in it—wasting our money swilling and guzzling, swilling and guzzling. But we've got into the way. And our homes are nought. We've nowhere but the pubs

to go to. We shall all be there again as soon as they're open. By ten o'clock we shall all be about drunk. It's a poor way of going on. Why can't somebody teach our women-folk to take a proper interest in things, and make our homes so—as we can be comfortable in them, and show a bit of sense and consideration. When a man comes home from work he wants a bit more comfort than he finds in most houses. A woman can make a man about what she likes, nine times out of ten. If any good ever comes from this 'ere temperance work it'll have to come through women keeping better homes for the working men."

All appeared to silently agree to this conclusion. I was left pondering.

Three days later I was looking up cases of men who had been dealt with by summons for drunkenness, and whom I had not chanced to meet when they appeared before the magistrates. I had been told by the officers concerned in the cases that I should find certain of the men at home in the afternoons of that week, since it was their turn to work "on nights"; consequently I timed my visits for about the hour when they would have risen from bed to prepare to go forth on their evening duty.

It was half-past four when I reached a five-roomed house in a long street of similar artisan dwellings monotonously arranged in rows. At intervals all along the street groups of women stood gossiping. When I knocked at the door of the house I desired to enter, a woman of about fifty years old sauntered up from one of the groups to know my business. Learning it, she entered the house. Going to the foot of the stairs, she called out, "Ned, there's somebody wants to see thee!" and departed to rejoin her friends.

The sun streamed through dirty window-panes

into a fairly well-furnished room, mercilessly exhibiting hopeless housewifery. Ashes rose from the hearth to the middle bar of a dirty grate in which a huge fire burned, though it was a particularly close day in May. Bits of paper, bones cast down for a dog, bread crusts and crumbs, littered the floor. One-half the table, dirty and without cloth, was laden with unwashed crockery; on the other half, a loaf of bread, a plate of ham, half a pound of butter on a greasy piece of paper, a pot of tea, a small tin of condensed milk, a basin of sugar, a cup and saucer, and a knife and fork, were spread. The ham, butter, milk, and sugar were black with flies, and the heat of the room was stifling. It was plain that no attempt at cleaning, or tidying, or dusting the room had been made that day, and that anything would do for the unfortunate inmates of that home both as regards comfort and cleanliness. The flies were either unnoticed or accepted as inevitable.

Ned appeared as I took note of the condition of the room. He was a man about five-and-twenty years old, nearly six feet high, good-looking, and of fine physique. I was pleasantly surprised to own him as the very man who had told on the previous Sunday of Percy's well-doing. He did not seem equally pleased to see me, but that was too common an experience of mine to cause me any worry. I knew he would soon mend of that. I only detained him from his meal long enough to obtain a promise that he would be in when I called on the evening of the Monday following. He would be working "on days" then, and we should be able to have a little chat, I remarked. It was evident that he noticed and was ashamed of the untidy, comfortless appearance of his mother's house, and that my presence under the circumstances embarrassed him.

As I left I contrived to detach the mother from her group of gossiping friends in order to tell her I was sorry her son had been summoned, and that I was calling again to see him as arranged; adding, "I hope we shall be able among us to keep him away from the Police Court in future; make him as comfortable at home as you can."

I studiously avoided anything in manner or matter suggestive of preaching, and she replied that while she did not see how she could do more, she would try what could be done.

Passing on to a house at the further end of the same street I found another man I was seeking. He was finishing tea before going to work. This house was in much the same slovenly and untidy condition as the last. It boasted a piano, and there were other signs that money was not scarce there. But nothing about the place suggested a home. It was evident that the meal on the table had been hastily prepared, and that, apart from brewing the tea, the man's mother had taken no part in the making of any of the constituent articles of food; all had been fetched by pennyworths and threepennyworths from a shop. There were a cake of bread, a small bit of butter, the remains of half a pound of brawn, the usual small tin of condensed milk, the usual dirty, bare table top, and the usual flies.

The woman went out, hot, cross, and flurried, as I entered; her son's face was clouded and sullen. They had evidently been falling out, probably about the quality of the meal provided.

I saw at once that my visit was ill-timed, and after telling him that I should like a little talk with him when convenient, proceeded to arrange for a more auspicious date, suggesting the next Monday, since I was calling on Ned then. He

enquired if I had been to see that individual, and I acknowledged that I had. Then he asked, "Wasn't you on the car last Sunday afternoon?"

In his working clothes I had not recognised the man as of the company whose conversation had interested me on the occasion referred to. I now saw that he was the speaker who had hazarded the opinion that getting out to a new country had been the means of Percy and Herbert's reformation.

"If you're the gentleman as helped those two to get away from here," he said when I told him he guessed correctly, "and if you can hold out any hope of getting me abroad, I'll come and see you anywhere and any time. Once I get away, I'll never touch drink again as long as I live. But I want to get right away. I'm sick of this."

I told him where and at what hours he might see me conveniently to himself, whether working by day or night. He was ready to start for his place of employment by this time. We went out together. The women still stood idly in the street, gossiping.

"That's the trouble," he said bitterly, nodding towards one of the groups; "my father will be home soon, and you see the state the house is in. Just about as he turns into the street, my mother'll begin to bustle about, and get excited and bad-tempered. Then when he gets to the house and sees things flying about, he'll begin to make a row. He doesn't see why he should go and work hard all day long and then come home to a pig-sty because women must gossip and drink from morning to night. And I don't either.

"But that doesn't mend things. He gets the best tea he can catch, and then my sisters come in from their work, and he tells them as they

ought to buckle to and tidy things up a bit. And they tell him to shut up,—they're going to do as they like. And my mother sides with them, and says they're right enough, and there's no suiting him. So he offs it to the public-house, and gets back about ten, and has another row, and goes to bed."

The car came up to take the speaker to his work. Ned joined him with a pleasant "Hullo, Hugh," and nodding farewell to me they went their way.

The problem here was the often overlooked problem of the slut. We lose ourselves in a maze of economic causes of social difficulties, and only too frequently forget that the thrifty, tidy housewife manages to win through the most trying circumstances and to preserve her family in decent respectability and comfort. Upon the women, infinitely more than upon the men, the happiness of our country depends. It is, for example, vastly more unfortunate when young children lose a good mother than when they lose a good father. The tidy, thrifty mother left with children continues to be tidy and thrifty, and the children suffer very little, explain the mystery as we will. The best of fathers, at any rate of the working classes, is helpless when the good mother is gone. Too often the children, who used to be so clean and so neatly and carefully dressed, speedily come to appear dirty, ragged, and neglected. There is so much that money cannot buy. In my experience it can seldom buy anything at all comparable with the virtues of thrift and tidiness, unfortunately so rare in some parts of our great cities.

We pull down our slum dwellings at great cost. The sluts who made the slum dwellings remain. They migrate to continue slum-making

in new quarters. Nor need we flatter ourselves that at least we know the slum areas. The slut exists in houses of high rental occupied by persons of every social grade. There are slum houses where we should hardly look to find them. And so long as the slut is with us it is idle to hope to have done with the slut's handiwork, and the misery and ruin it involves. Until we recognise that, we shall spend our money and our energy quite in vain.

It is most emphatically not because we have cleared away certain slum areas from our cities that things are as well as they are. It is because two-thirds of the women of our land are the excellent and thrifty persons they are that things are not vastly worse. Raise the remaining third to the same standard, and the problem of the slums is solved. Solve the problem of the slums, and we have gone more than half-way towards solving the drink problem.

I make mention of slums here, not because the street I had just come away from could then be properly called a slum street, but because it is a slum street now. It is given as an example of the creation of slums by idle, gossiping, thriftless women. The few excellent housewives who then occupied houses in the street are now gone elsewhere. The worse sort alone remain, recruited by others of their own and even a still more careless type, who now tenant the houses in which better women were no longer content to stay. The whole street has gone swiftly on the downhill road. It is now a collection of slum dwellings scarcely relieved by a single decent habitation. It exhibits the finished product of the slut's handiwork.

I went the same night to enquire into the character borne by Ned and Hugh for industry, ability, and honesty. The foreman under whom

they were engaged turned out to be the very man who had tried to explain the causes of the reformation so frequently effected in the lives of emigrants. He was a big, strong, intelligent, capable-looking man, about fifty years old. He occupied a house of a size ridiculously small considering his income of more than four pounds a week. It was situated in a poor neighbourhood, and its interior struck one as lacking greatly in taste and comfort. But it was clean, tidy, and well-furnished.

Later on, I found that the man's wife regarded the house as big enough for the requirements of the family. A larger house would mean more work, and she had work enough already. She did not consider that removal from the grimy atmosphere in which they lived to the purer suburban air would decrease to some extent the amount of her toil, which certainly was heavy enough, since she herself undertook the baking, cooking, washing, cleaning, and mending for a family of seven persons. Moving from that neighbourhood would mean moving from relations among whom she had lived all her life quite contentedly. She lacked imagination. She lived in a groove. She saw no advantage in change. She had got quite used to a sort of fixed idea that a working man's home is the place where he eats his meals, smokes an occasional pipe, and goes to bed. He is not expected to spend any really considerable part of his waking hours there. The house seems more as it should be in his absence. This was a view she had been accustomed to from her youth up. Her mother regarded it as a sore thing "to have a man always stuck in the house." The husband's part was to provide the means for keeping the house going, the wife's to reasonably discharge the duties of

keeping the place clean and preparing the best meals she could. Having done this, each had done all that was looked for. Their three sons and two daughters, all of working age and in remunerative employment, were grown or growing to manhood and womanhood sharing the same view of things. Such a conception of the duties of a wife and mother is a great improvement upon the slut's. But it leaves much to be desired.

Received very civilly, I apologised for failing to call at the man's place of work before he had left for the day, and for the consequent necessity I felt for following him home. He invited me into a small, stiff parlour, stuffy from being mostly closed and unused. It was plain that he was not at ease there—that I should have found him more at home in his little box of an office at the works, or in the "best room" of the "Blue Bell"—with a special preference for the "Blue Bell." Still he gave me the particulars I sought regarding Ned and Hugh readily and pleasantly enough.

"They're hard-working chaps," he said, "and clever at their work, and as honest as the day. They drink a goodish lot; but then their work's very hot, and a chap must drink at that job. They're furnacemen, you know. I've only known two teetotallers in my life do their work—and one of them's taken to insurance collecting and the other's dead."

My experience was perhaps wider: I knew many total abstainers engaged in the hottest and most laborious work. But I had come rather to hear his views than to give my own. I pointed out that Ned and Hugh had each been three times convicted of drunkenness, and said it was a pity they were so intemperate.

"Of course it is," he answered; "that's right

enough. I've told them many a time myself that they've been brought up bad. They've never been taught the difference between drinking and guzzling. Men who drink in moderation are good pals and good company. Men who guzzle are fools who spoil everything. One reason why I've mixed with Ned and Hugh a bit away from work is because I think they've more sense than to go on as they are doing for long."

"What do you think of Hugh's idea of going abroad?" I enquired. "I suppose he has told you of it?"

"What's he need go abroad for, or Ned either?" was the reply. "They're both of them in good work here. Why can't they pull up and drink in moderation or else leave it alone? That's all that's wrong with 'em. Get 'em to sign the pledge if you think they can't control themselves, and try 'em a bit longer here before sending 'em abroad."

"I'll tell you what I think. I think a lot too much is made of young fellows going to church or chapel regular. Some like to go. It's in their line. It's their amusement, like. And they get among a set of their own, and go to one another's houses, and live apart from the majority of people as you may say. Now that's all right as far as it goes. But the parson's time is all spent on this set. If a man doesn't go to church, he can go to the devil. The parson seems to think he's a bad lot altogether. He never stops to think that it's merely a matter of taste—some like churchgoing, and some can't abide it as a regular thing. In the same way some'll be at every wedding or funeral that's going. Others'll only go when it's somebody very particular."

"Now you might as well say that all the people who go to weddings or funerals every time they can are the good folk, and all who stop away every time they can are the bad folk, as count up those

who attend church or chapel regular, and say, 'These are the religious men.'

"I say, the religious men are the men who do what's right. I know lots who are as good as gold, and whom you can depend on any time for the right thing, but who haven't been in a place of worship for years. And I know some who are real good fellows who would feel miserable if they had to miss a service. We'll say nought about the vagabonds on either side.

"Now I'm happier in the company of those who don't make much profession—who are more my own sort; but I think a lot about the others as well. Our ideas and our ways are different, though; and it's pleasanter to spend your spare time with those who like what you like. But they're all the same to me when we meet in the street, or when we're working together.

"I can understand the parsons liking the folk best who like what they like. But they ought to say to them, 'Now we know one another, and you'll quite see as I can't spend as much time with you as I'd like; because, while you come to me and save me a lot of trouble, I've all that other lot to see about, as want a deal of looking up. And we must think of them; and instead of fancy services same as *we* like, we must have something plain, and some good old-fashioned hymns what *they* like, and try and get them to come to church now and then as well. But we mustn't overdo 'em, and we must talk sense to 'em when they come.'

"But they don't do that. They count all who don't go to church or chapel as outside their set altogether. And these outsiders have to go to Australia, or America, or South Africa before they find anybody to take a real interest in them. It's soft: there ought to be more interest taken in them here."

I agreed, but pointed out that things being as

they are, I feared that Ned and Hugh would do no better than Percy and Herbert had done so long as they remained here, since by all I could see and hear their homes were against them.

"Aye, that's a drawback, certainly," was his comment; "that's where most teetotallers have a pull; their homes are something like. When they get in they don't care about leaving them for pubs.

"Somehow, some women have a knack of making a house what others never can make it, try as they may. Besides, a man soon gets tired of their company; that's why he goes to a public-house. But there's where the churches ought to come in. Women who have decent, comfortable homes ought to teach other women to make their homes the same, instead of being always fussing about meetings and services, or being like my missus, fond of 'nobody's company so much as their own, and taking no interest in anybody outside their own house or their own folk.

"And the church- and chapel-going men, they ought to take young fellows who have poor homes into their own decent places if they want to keep 'em out of the public-houses. That would be the grandest piece of teetotal work ever tried in England—if temperance folk would open their homes to such-like young fellows and make real friends of them. If you send Ned and Hugh away somebody will have to do it there or else they'll go wrong, no matter where you send them. Why not get somebody to do it here and save expense?"

He had quite run away from his original contention that the men could not do their work without alcohol. I did not argue the matter, but promising to adopt his later suggestions if practicable, parted from my breezy friend considerably impressed. Experience told me both of the aptness of his criticism of the work of the churches and of the difficulty of securing that personal service he

recommended. Because of this difficulty I wrote to my caller of nearly three years before asking if he could receive Ned and Hugh should they ultimately decide to emigrate to Australia.

My visit to their homes, according to promise, was disappointing. The street was noisy, their houses were untidy, and it was impossible to speak with the men except in the hearing of others; so I agreed to meet them later in my rooms. We talked over the question of emigration. Both were anxious to go. I pointed out that no immediate relative financial improvement was to be expected from taking that course. They had regular work, their wages were good; it was merely a matter of leaving drink alone. Why take a journey to Australia to do that? Why not do it here?

If I could have found one man to take charge of Ned, and another to take charge of Hugh, persons who could adapt themselves to their tastes, and who would take them as visitors to their own homes, spending a great deal of trouble over them, and sharing their leisure time, something might have been done. That proved impossible. The best I could do was to persuade the men to join an institute for recreation, run on broad lines by a certain church. I suggested that they should exchange their uncomfortable homes for good lodgings, but they would not hear of that. Lodgings were plainly worse in their judgment than home, no matter how good the lodgings or how bad the home. They signed the total abstinence pledge, and, I believe, really meant to keep it.

They called on me once a week, but frankly told me very early that the institute would not do. They said the men who attended were "all right, but not our class." They meant that no mutual hobbies and interests existed between them. So they went back to the public-house, where they felt more at home, and met with companions they

had more sympathy with. Their foreman came to see me after six weeks had gone, and told me in his breezy way that he was glad I had had the sense to take his advice. Ned and Hugh were already reformed. They could join the company at the "Blue Bell" now without making fools of themselves.

I reminded him how their homes remained unaltered, but he had changed his mind temporarily about the importance of that fact. "There's lots of chaps," he said, "who have worse homes, and find the public-house to make up for that. My opinion is that these two have steadied down, and now they're off the drink, the pub's a real boon to them."

But they failed to keep "off the drink." A man's birthday came round, and everybody who patronised the "Blue Bell" had to drink his health. Whisky was the favoured beverage, and Ned and Hugh, being unfortunately present, could not of course be rude. They felt obliged to show courtesy by following a time-honoured custom. Whether the whisky tasted specially good, and they consumed a considerable quantity, or whether, as they declared to me, they had only two glasses, "which took hold of them, having been off drink so long, like," it was not worth while trying to find out. The magistrates assessed the amount payable for a consequent breach of the peace at twenty shillings apiece, and each defendant sought to withdraw that amount from the sum he had deposited with me with a view to emigration. Instead of that, payment of the fine on the instalment plan was arranged, while I insisted that the weekly sum of fifteen shillings they were each bringing me to save should be maintained if Australia was still in their minds. My main object in this was to further restrict their means for indulging in excessive drinking.

As they were bent upon going away, they stuck loyally to the agreement; yet for all I could do their spare bit of money still went the old way. It was a relief when a letter came stating that I might send them to Australia by a ship sailing that same week, if I cared to risk the money on them. My correspondent undertook to meet the ship, find the men a good home and reasonably remunerative employment; also to exercise a friendly supervision over them, and to do his utmost to see that any money advanced for their benefit was faithfully repaid.

I went at once to the foreman and laid the matter before him, hoping that he would see his way to overlooking the period of notice of intention to leave their employment which Ned and Hugh ought rightly to serve. The excellent fellow not only did that, but expressed the opinion that the amount of money required for their emigration, over and above the sums deposited with me, could be raised by patrons of the "Blue Bell" who wished them well. And to their credit they did it the same night.

The foreman in bringing the money was accompanied by another of the men I had first met on the car that Sunday afternoon, the same man who had expressed a wish that somebody would offer all the party a chance in a new country. They were good enough to tell me that I had done the best I could for Ned and Hugh. But they said some severe things about the failure of the churches to make it as easy as it ought to be for young men to live soberly and happily in England.

I saw these two men again four days later when I rendered my account, after reporting that Ned and Hugh had duly sailed, perfectly sober, and under the care of a clergyman who chanced to be going out to Australia by the same liner, and

generously promised to make them his special companions for the voyage.

"Well, now, doesn't that beat my Aunt Kate!" the foreman exclaimed as he heard the good news; "while they're at home the parsons don't bother about 'em a bit. As soon as they're going away a parson steps up ready to take no end of trouble with 'em. I can't reckon it up why they wait till a fellow's either going away or dying before they take any notice of him."

It struck me, rather, that since I had found the only clergyman on the boat so ready to do what he could for my friends, the inference was, as I have found to be the fact, that the clergy, speaking generally, are only too eager to be of service. Where they lack is in initiative to seek out, and method to win and hold, those who badly need their aid. They come up when "a fellow's either going away or dying" because their attention is usually drawn to what it would be to greater purpose if they saw for themselves. That is, of course, a general rule. There are a considerable number of exceptive clergymen who are experts at rescue and reformative work, and who do it in a manner beyond all praise.

Possibly the root of the matter was touched by the foreman's companion. "My opinion is," he said, "that there's so many to be looked up, and so many houses in their parishes that the parsons reckon nought to putting their heads inside, that they give the thing up as a bad job. They tinkle a bell, and gather two or three folk together in church now and then on week-days, and gabble prayers over to themselves when there's nobody else there. Twice a Sunday they get a goodish few all of a sort to the services, and a dozen or two to Communions and what not. Then they're done, only for going to see people that's badly (ill) if they're asked to go and see 'em, and for meet-

ings we read about in the papers of parsons holding about every day to set the world right.

"They mean well, I believe, but they know no more about what ordinary folk are thinking and what such as us want than a tom-tit. Them mend the world! Why, there's not one out of ten of 'em as knows how to teach a man how to live. They're that full up with teaching 'em how to die—what nobody's interested in, because it isn't good sense. Teach a man how to live, and he'll know how to die! That's my way of thinking. If he's not been taught that—if he's lived like a hog—he'll die like a hog, without bothering about parsons. They may go and see him, but he'd as lief they stayed away. They'll never mend the world until they get more practical. Why can't they say to their people, 'Now, my lads and lasses, you've heard so many sermons, you ought to be sick of listening; and if you're not sick of listening, I'm sick of preaching. We'll shut church up for three months, and buckle to and visit all the mucky homes in the parish, and turn 'em inside out, and show people a better way of living.' There'd be something done then. As it is there's too much form in religion and too little of the real thing."

Clerical friends sometimes tell me they envy my opportunities of knowing what worldlings are thinking. I present these examples as faithfully as I can remember, giving the exact sense, and as nearly as possible the very words.

It was August when Ned and Hugh went out. By the middle of the following January they had paid back the whole sum advanced towards their passage-money by their old acquaintance of the "Blue Bell." In earlier letters they had mentioned appreciatively the attention given them by the clergyman aboard ship, the wise advice and promising start afforded by the friend who met them on landing, and the prosperous condition in

which they found Percy and Herbert. Free from debt, and getting on well in their employment, they now grew enthusiastic about the wonders of the land of their adoption and the good nature and hospitality of its people. In a little while they came to wondering why any mortal remained in England, expressing much sympathy for old fellow-workmen and acquaintance who continued under the industrial and social conditions of the Motherland. As they continued to prosper they struck the same note of reproof already struck by Percy and Herbert, pouring scorn on the drinking customs of the old country.

Certain developments during the following year brought about a local scarcity of labour which caused their employer to again visit England. He called on me once more, asking for five or six men on the terms gladly taken by Percy and Herbert five years earlier, and since he showed his old peculiar prejudice in favour of drinkers it was easy to satisfy his requirements.

I collected twelve men anxious to emigrate, and he came along to interview them. Unfortunately, a drove of idlers from common lodging-houses had selected the same wet dreary evening to call, in a forlorn hope of obtaining money to pay for their beds that night. I was dealing with them in the lobby when the Australian employer arrived, and I left them for a moment for the purpose of welcoming him in an adjoining room.

He closed the door with a look of reproachful dismay, and exclaimed, "What's that lot? I can stand a good deal; but none of them will do. Why, you must have raked hell to gather a crew like that."

I hastened to reassure him and to dismiss the unsavoury company. Then I introduced him to my selected candidates.

Six were in regular employment, but, with an

over-stocked English labour market, were in danger of losing their situations because of their drinking habits. The other six had lost their work from the same fault. All the twelve possessed a reputation for general honesty, industry, and ability. Compared with the set of men who had startled my friend, they looked a capable, respectable lot. The upshot of the interview was that all the twelve received an offer of work in Australia, all accepted the offer, and the party were aboard a liner a month later.

They were greatly helped on their arrival by the men who had gone out earlier, and mentioned the fact gratefully in their letters to me. They also paid a striking tribute to the home life they found out there.

"If things were the same in England as they are here," one of them wrote, "there would be a different sort of going on for working folk. I've heard people say that all the public-houses ought to be shut up; and I used to ask where working men would spend their spare time if they couldn't drop into a public-house at night and be comfortable. Now I'm sure I don't know how far I should have to go to find a pub, or a club, or aught of the sort, because I don't want no such place. Where I live everything is nice and tidy, and a man doesn't feel in the way when he comes home. He gets among respectable company, and can have a game, or go to a concert or what not; and besides, he feels at home with folk; they go a long way out of their road to make him welcome among them."

I do not pretend to say these men would have been equally fortunate wheresoever they had settled in Australia. I have no means of knowing. But their unanimous testimony was emphasised when the wives of the only two married men

sent out joined their husbands a year later. They were young women, each with two little children. Their homes here had suffered because they gave too much attention to visiting their mothers and friends, and also showed in every way that they regarded household duties as irksome. It never entered their heads to take a pride in their homes until they rejoined their husbands. Whether their husbands' absence, aided by certain advice given them before they started from here, had caused them to realise their own shortcomings and to determine to do better, or whether the example of Colonial housewives was responsible, it would be interesting to know; anyhow, a great change came about in their method of housekeeping. Soon they also were vigorously denouncing sluts, and wondering how people could endure conditions they were themselves so lately content with.

There were interesting comparisons also of houses at home, as against houses in Australia, much in favour of Australia. It would appear that they regarded sluts as the product of slums, and not slums as the product of sluts. They seemed either to have never noticed, or else soon forgotten, that next door to each of them in their old homes lived widows who each supported families of six young children on incomes of seventeen shillings and seventeen shillings and sixpence a week respectively; and that the widows wrought the miracle of keeping spotlessly clean and beautifully home-like dwellings while going out daily to earn their families' means of support. It may well be that, freed from the grimy atmosphere of a great manufacturing town, they found housekeeping infinitely easier and more pleasant under the new conditions. Undoubtedly the housewife whose dwelling is surrounded by a dusty, soot-laden atmosphere, and the members of whose family return from work

or school or play with body and clothing unavoidably soiled, has a laborious and heart-breaking task to maintain the highest ideals of cleanliness and comfort. But equally, undoubtedly, many face and overcome every difficulty without a groan. I cheerfully subscribe to the opinion that the working wives and mothers of our great manufacturing centres as a class richly deserve that every effort should be made to render more pure the atmosphere in which they are forced to live. I readily admit that houses may too often be found hopelessly unfit for human habitation. But I still maintain that were a colony of our worst sort of working women removed to the most carefully constructed model village, they would infallibly make of it a model slum within five years unless by some means they were got to entirely alter their mode of living.

In my judgment, it was because they found it to be the custom to keep tidy homes in the land of their adoption that these young wives developed into the tidy bodies they speedily became there. They found that the slut was isolated and unpopular. They gravitated naturally to the side of the majority. They would have found it too difficult to do otherwise, just as in the district from which they removed when emigrating they had found it too difficult to resist strong pressure from the opposite direction. Everybody knows that street after street may be found in the artisan districts of any manufacturing centre at home, unmarred by a single dirty dwelling. Almost against their will some women are constrained by the example of their neighbours to keep their houses as they should. Again, street after street may be found with only an occasional tidy dwelling, usually occupied by a family too poor to move from a neighbourhood of which they are ashamed. Among the rest it mostly happens

there are some who would do better but are deterred by the evil influence and example of their neighbours. It is much easier to stand still and blame the property owner and the atmospheric conditions, than set to work and make the best of things.

It was at any rate satisfactory that the change came about, be the causes whatsoever; and it was a peculiarly gratifying testimonial of these English wives' ability to compete with their Colonial sisters when I was given the privilege of helping in a humble way to facilitate the departure for Australia of the two daughters of their former foreman, to whom Ned and Hugh had been writing amorous letters which culminated in matrimony. They also turned out to be excellent wives. But their explanation of the happier conditions of home life in the colonies was that "Colonials make such good husbands." No doubt they came to a shrewd conclusion. But you cannot train good husbands as a rule—there are exceptions—in pigsties anywhere. The credit for making and the blame for marring husbands goes to the women-folk everywhere. Mothers have a big say in the matter, and wives a bigger; but between them their influence is as irresistible as anything I know of.

The wisdom of choice shown by Ned and Hugh was manifested when through illness their parents fell on evil days. In spite of the wretchedness of their early home life, each man sent a regular and handsome contribution to assist his mother in carrying on the house. To the inexperienced social student this fact may convey nothing. The experienced generally see the wife behind any recognition of filial responsibility on the part of a married man. Where the wife is anxious that in the day of their poverty, father, mother, sister, or brother shall be helped, all but the very worst

husband is usually most willing that help shall be given. Where the wife determines that no help shall go, only an exceptional husband will be able to offer successful opposition to her will. The same truth prevails in the more pathetic case of a man's children. If the stepmother sees nothing in them but what is repulsive and blameworthy, their father will slowly but surely come to regard them with impatience and frequently without affection. If the stepmother adopts them as her very own, the father grows more and more fond and proud of them. Would that it were more seriously considered how tremendous is the power our women wield for good or ill! There would then be unstinted praise and admiration for millions, and a laudable desire for the emulation of their example by numbers sadly too vast whom it is now impossible to praise.

Thanks to political forethought, unfortunately neglected in the Motherland, all my Australian friends had received military instruction which enabled them to respond instantly to the great call to arms. Every one of them landed in Egypt to complete their training under the shadow of the pyramids, and meanwhile to be ready to repel a possible Turkish invasion. Then all proceeded with their battalion to effect that historical landing on the Gallipoli Peninsula.

Before they reached the beach near Gapa Tepe at dawn on the 25th April 1915, the boats in which the landing was being effected came under a terrible fusilade of entrenched rifle and maxim gun fire. Most of the bullets went high, but unfortunately many men were hit as they sat huddled up by fifties in the boats. Waiting neither for orders nor for the boats to reach the beach, the Australians sprang into the sea, waded ashore, and forming a rough line, rushed straight on the flashes of the enemy's rifles. Their maga-

zines were not charged, so they attacked with the bayonet and cleared the first line of trenches in a minute. Then they found themselves facing a precipitous cliff of loose sandstone covered with thick shrubbery, half-way up which the Turks had a second trench from which they were pouring a terrible fire on the troops below and on the boats pulling back for a second landing party.

Casting aside their heavy packs, they filled their magazines and scaled the cliff careless of the enemy's fire. Some men fell. Their comrades pressed forward undaunted and cleared the Turks out of their second position in less than a quarter of an hour.

Heavy firing at point-blank range still continued to be directed at the landing parties from many a concealed trench on numerous cliffs which rise sharply from the water's edge, but the work of disembarkation went mechanically on. Officers and men who formed the beach parties worked the boats backwards and forwards under that trying fusilade with splendid courage, the bravery of the home seamen vying with the bravery of their Colonial brethren. The moment a boat reached the beach, the troops jumped out and doubled for cover to the foot of the bluffs over some forty yards of beach, but its crew had to pull back under a dropping fire from a hundred points of vantage occupied by the enemy's marksmen.

When daylight came the heavy fire of covering warships gave them as effective support as the unknown positions of the enemy rendered possible. The sun rose, the haze disappeared, and those aboard the warships were astonished to observe that the Australians had already established themselves on top of the ridge. The fire from the hills became intense for about half an hour, died down for a little while, then reopened to continue

without cessation throughout the remainder of the day. But the covering force formed by the first landing parties splendidly held on to the crest of the ridge and made possible the disembarkation of the rest of the troops in comparative safety except for never-ceasing sniping.

The enemy brought up reinforcements about dusk, and his attacks grew still more vigorous, being supported by powerful inland artillery which the ships' guns could not deal with. The pressure on the Australians and New Zealanders waxed heavier. Their line was contracted for the night. Their commanding officer, General Birdwood, went ashore with his staff, and all energies were directed to securing the position and to holding it firmly until next morning, when it was hoped to employ field-guns to silence the enemy's artillery.

Meanwhile such of the wounded as could had hobbled or crawled to the beach; others were carried down on stretchers by comrades, who hastily dressed their wounds before bearing them back to the boats. Disdaining death in their work of mercy, these heroic men never ceased their labours through the entire day and night. As for the wounded, their heroism was unforgettable. They were towed among the ships, and, while accommodation was being prepared for them, forgot their pain, forgot, many of them, that their poor bodies were shattered beyond hope of recovery, and cheered and cheered again for old England through the night, waving their arms in greeting to the crews of the warships.

In the morning it became known that the Turks had brought up heavy additional forces and were preparing a powerful assault. They could be seen from the warships creeping in large numbers along the tops of the hills, endeavouring to approach the positions our men had won. They

had brought up more guns during the night; our troops were annoyed with incessant sniping, and shell from the guns burst over our whole position.

But they were not allowed to have matters all their own way. The *Queen Elizabeth*, standing out to sea, supported by seven smaller ships, moved in close to the shore and opened a terrific bombardment of a section of the enemy's line. The day was beautifully clear. There were the warships blazing away at the Turkish positions on the hills, covering the summits with great white clouds from bursting shells. Further out to sea were the great transports looming through a slight mist. A cruiser close inshore covered the low ground with her guns. Protecting all, the *Queen Elizabeth* with her eight fifteen-inch guns all pointing to the shore threatened instant destruction to any enemy venturing even to aim at the squadron under her charge. A flash of bayonets and a sudden charge of the Colonials, before which the Turks broke and fled amid a hurricane of shells from the ships, brought a two hours' attack to its end. The Turks fell back checked but not defeated, though for the remainder of the day they attempted no further serious assault, while the Colonials consolidated their own position and removed their prisoners.

Although still greatly superior in numbers, the enemy had suffered too severely to attempt more than sniping tactics during the night, except at one section of our line, where they paid dearly for an attempt to press home an attack, the New Zealanders charging them with the bayonet and driving them off with heavy loss. When the morning of the 27th April dawned, it was plain that the Turks were in no humour to tackle the Colonials in the positions they had now prepared to form a semicircular front covering the whole

of the foreshore. It was now possible to disembark troops, supplies, guns, and ammunition with comparative safety. The Turks had thought of driving our troops into the sea by their terrific fire of the previous morning. They had been disillusioned. The Australians and New Zealanders, mostly volunteers of a few months' training and under fire for the first time, had fought with the coolness and skill of veterans. Their intrepid courage and their splendid soldierly qualities had won the day. Thenceforward nothing the Turks under the guidance of their German officers could do could stay the landing, which went on calmly and smoothly until completed.

I have pieced this narrative together from letters sent me by three of the twelve men I mentioned as going out last under the charge of my Australian friend. They had all been wounded in various stages of the fight they described, and they saw what transpired as they landed from the boats, stormed the cliffs and were brought back disabled to the ships, or as they watched eagerly from the decks. Later on one of them died of his wounds, as five of those twelve had already died for King and Empire. Ned and Hugh, Percy and Herbert, and the four other Australians known to me, fought through that stirring period and emerged without a scratch, to enter many another engagement and win golden opinions for their coolness and skill and courage.

"We are looking forward," Ned says in a letter which I received only to-day, "to finishing this business here soon, and we're hoping to be in time to meet with Kaiser Bill's own in France, and march with our comrades as we drive the Huns before us to Berlin. We've been doing our duty here, and sometimes we've been in tightish places, and you know we've lost officers by the score—some of them

the finest gentlemen that ever lived—and hundreds and hundreds of grand men. But still the real work's in France and Belgium, and we want to be there. The Turks are Bill's cat's-paws. They'd got to be reckoned with and done for, of course; and they're about done for at last. And it's the master-devil we want to get at now. We've read how women and children have been served by him and his brood, and Heaven help Englishwomen if he's not scotched! He's going to be scotched, though; and we're going to take a hand in the business; and it'll be done thoroughly. You bet on that!

“It isn't a lot of drunken louts that are coming either. Without any boasting, we're a proper lot. You'll be proud of us when we come to England (God's will being to spare us) when all is done. And our wives, and mothers, and sisters will make a lot of us, I expect, if we do come back. And if we don't—well, it will be something to have died in saving them from those infernal brutes; for saved I am sure they will be whoever lives to see it and tell the tale. Well, thank you for the parcel, sir, and God bless everybody in England and in Australia too.”

VII.

IN THE MERCANTILE MARINE.

Two ragamuffins, twin-brothers nearly nineteen years old; dwarfs, painfully thin, with pale faces showing through plentiful grime; hair unkempt, boots without soles,—they had called on their way from work, being old friends of mine.

“We tried to ’list last night,” one of them informed me.

I was startled at their audacity,—they looked such unlikely recruits.

“Well,” I asked when I had recovered myself, “and what did the recruiting officer say to you?”

“He says, ‘We ’list soldiers here. This isn’t a sardine-packing factory.’” The speaker had nothing to add to that reply.

It was impossible to fail to see the aptness of the simile, looking at the lads’ wretched physique. It was also pleasing to notice that they enjoyed the irony of the sergeant’s remark in their sad, quiet way.

Why they wished to enlist I could readily guess. It was to get away from the place they called home. Their brother, eighteen months their senior, had shown them the way. Under the less exacting conditions lately adopted he had managed to pass the doctor, and was now in the Army.

His glowing pictures of abundant food, warm clothing, and comfortable huts, with plenty of pocket-money and a life that was all play, appealed strongly to their imagination. No doubt they would have found the life equally attractive could they have shared it. For it contained a great deal in the way of happiness which they had never previously dreamed of experiencing.

They were named Harry and George Harry—after a not uncommon custom in some districts to bestow the father's name upon several boys of the same family. Probably the father of these lads considered that, having conferred upon them the inestimable blessing of his name, he need worry no more about them. They were dragged up somehow until they were able to work. When I got to know them they were sixteen years old, and engaged in heavy labour at a steel manufactory.

Ragged and ill-fed then as ever, George Harry had the misfortune to tread upon a piece of red-hot steel. His wretched boots failed to protect his feet, and he was off work for three weeks from burns in consequence. Harry's boots were a little better, and he cudgelled his brains to find means to place his brother on an equality with him in that important matter so soon as he was able to resume work. Possibly the fact that the loss of George Harry's wages had sadly reduced the already scanty fare at home had much to do with this anxiety.

Taking a walk on a hot Saturday afternoon, Harry came to a place by a riverside where some lads were bathing. A collection of boots was arrayed temptingly on the grass. Harry selected a pair which he guessed would fit his brother, and made off with such haste as to arouse the bathers' suspicions. They left the water and bounded after him barefooted. He saw a police officer a long way in front of him, and dropped

the boots, hoping his pursuers would give up the chase. But their blood was hot and they ran him into the constable's arms.

He was dealt with lightly for the offence. I was introduced to George Harry, waiting in the precincts of the Court to hear the worst, and I went home with the lads, who seemed little to dread the displeasure of a father and mother who had not even taken the trouble to come to the hearing of the case.

Oh for a stout rod for such parents, and legal power to use it! The father was out of work. That was his common condition then, and during the three years I have since known him. The machinery at his place of work is in a state of perpetual break-down; idle fellow-workmen upon whom his own work depends, by their negligence make it impossible for him to work; he has awful colds which render it dangerous for him to put his head out of doors. He is vastly to be pitied. Since the day of Job, few mortals have been tried as he is tried. In Job's day I venture to think he would not have survived his troubles. I have told him more than once, when he has quoted the patriarch, that a cure was known then for his complaint, and that a wise man like Job would assuredly have ended or mended him.

He is of course afflicted with chronic laziness. A good ash plant, well laid on, would do much for him in my judgment. His wife agrees with his notion that since six of the nine children they have brought into the world are now of working age, the parents ought to be able to take things more easily. For my own part I do not see how they can until they are dead. Short of that they could scarcely bestir themselves less. To describe the home would be superfluous. It is of a pattern with other hovels mentioned already. A police officer who knows both parents and home well

suggests the lethal chamber as offering the only likely means of reformation. I am in favour of more violent measures, on the principle that a living dog is better than a dead lion, though I feel an apology to be due to the dog for comparing him with these human beasts.

Perhaps I am prejudiced. Perhaps it was fondness for their offspring that prevented the parents from acquiescing in my desire to remove the twin brothers from their custody. I put it down to selfishness. I saw the lads working hard week by week, taking their money home, as their four other working brothers and sisters took their earnings home. But I never once knew any of the children have a new garment. One ragged bit of clothing replaced another only more ragged. A pair of boots with broken tops and poor soles replaced a pair with broken tops and no soles. They were fed like hogs, but on the scantiest fare. A tablecloth, even a newspaper, to cover the filthy table-top was unknown in their melancholy dwelling. They pulled their meat like dogs, knives and forks being unused there save for cutting off chunks from loaf or joint. They were seldom in the house except for meals and at bedtime, and they slept on straw mattresses in their clothes.

In severe weather I provided the twin-brothers with clothing and clogs several times over. When I gave up in despair, seeing that the parents began to take it for granted that I had undertaken perennial responsibility in that direction, the lads went stealing boots again. The magistrates, hearing what I had to tell of the state of things, censured the father, who was made to appear, and bound the lads over with the expressed hope that I should be able to get them away.

I was powerless to do so. I argued, pleaded, threatened. It was all in vain. "Right-minded parents never like to part with their children," I was calmly told. If the lads had done wrong,

they were not the first. They were not to be cast off by their parents on that account. As for my threats, if I could prove that the parents had not done their best, and get them punished, I was welcome to do so. If they were not fit to have charge of the children, the Court could take the children away. But I could not prove it. Supposing it to be just possible that I could speak the truth, I knew I could not. With the husband's irregular work and broken health, how could they possibly have done more? As for the cleanliness of the home and the bodily condition of the children, the "nuisance folk" had been, and the "cruelty folk," and they could bring "nothing against us but poverty, and it's no crime to be poor." I was welcome to ask any of the neighbours their character.

I knew that: and I knew the neighbours. It was hopeless to attempt anything with the machinery at my disposal, except to try and induce the lads to escape. But the lads shared with many of their type an amazing fondness for their parents, and would have none of my plans. So I settled down once more in the old unsatisfactory groove, which, while alleviating the boys' condition, put a premium on the parents' idleness and neglect. A welcome restiveness on the part of Harry and George Harry succeeded William Harry's enlistment. But the fact that they had endeavoured to follow his example came to me as a surprise only less gratifying than the hint it conveyed of their willingness to leave home at last.

The opportunity was too good to be missed. I provided outfits,¹ and arranged for berths for them in a schooner bound for a distant shore. When the lads next paid me their usual call, I put before them a proposal that they should go to sea. They jumped at the chance, willingly discarded their

¹ Thanks to the generosity of subscribers to a Fund for that purpose.

rags for portions of the outfits, and accompanied a friend of mine who had kindly undertaken to see them safely aboard ship.

About twelve o'clock the same night the parents began to search for their lost twins. After an hour, they settled down to wait till the following night. It was not the first time Harry and George Harry had put their parents to anxiety by staying out all night. They would perhaps come back next night, or the night after, or the night after that. Thus easy-going, they waited until a letter came from the lads telling that they had sailed. It was a cheerful, hopeful letter. I was glad to read it when the parents brought it to me. I should have been just as well pleased if my name had not been dragged in. The parents resented the part I had played. There was a storm, indeed. But it was my day now. I told them that the lads were anxious to go to sea, as they saw from the letter. They were not the first to go. It was not for me to refuse to help them to a chance in life. Proper parents were glad when folk gave their lads a lift.

They could make nothing of me, and went away muttering threats. I am told that proceedings are to be taken against me. None have been instituted yet. But the law's delays being notorious I will not boast at present.

George Harry wrote a letter which Harry counter-signed. It was posted at the Cape and reached me a few days ago.

"We are all right," it runs; "it's a sight better than being at home. We get plenty to eat, and we can eat all we get now. We got over being sea-sick after about a week, and we've been right ever since. They call us shrimps. They say as it's lucky as we are shrimps if we want to be together, 'cos they only wanted one lad, only he would have made the crew into thirteen, and that's un-

lucky. So we count two and make fourteen, but all the while we don't make above one regular-sized lad both together. We can do as much work, though, as bigger chaps. One of the sailors says, 'If you want a man for ornament, get a big 'un; and if you want one to work, get a little 'un'; and he's right. He's not very big himself, but he can shift things. We've nought on our ship but coal; and we drop that somewhere soon, and take something else to China or somewhere; and then we go somewhere else with something we pick up there, and drop that; and when we come home we shall bring a lot of muck (guano) with us from some island somewhere. It's a grand life, and we like it. The sailors say they weren't a bit frightened of mines or torpedoes when we came away from England. They say we make a grand pair of muskets (mascots). They say we're safe anywhere; we aren't big enough to drown."

They have at first sight, perhaps, no strong connection with the fighting forces of the Empire. When we consider the inestimable importance always, and at this time especially, of our mercantile marine, meaning as it does nothing less than our national existence, the value of their service becomes apparent. Physically unfit for Army or Navy, their places in the armament-works easily filled by lads whose home surroundings are at least a shade less intolerable, the twins are rendering the most useful service possible for them, while enjoying a life admirably calculated to make them physically sound and strong.

Going into our local Children's Court some three years ago, I found a big collection of provisions piled on the solicitors' table, and made the acquaintance of six offenders whose ages ranged

from thirteen to fifteen years. The young scamps had raided a grocer's shop. They were discovered with their plunder, consisting of tinned salmon, lobster, sardines, corned beef, pineapple, pears and plums, loaves of bread, bags of sugar, packets of tea, tins of cocoa, a ham, a flitch of bacon, a cheese, and sundry other articles of diet, by a wary constable as they bore their spoils on a handcart to an untenanted tumbledown house which they had taken possession of.

The lads' parents were all respectable working folk, who could not understand what had caused their sons to behave like that. They placed the escapade to the blame of a picture-palace the lads were fond of attending. They thought that perhaps the boys intended to sell the goods so as to get money to enable them to witness the exhibition of further sensational films.

It seemed an unlikely idea to me. I could only make a guess, being ignorant at that time of the lads' dispositions; and I could not at the moment contest the conclusion of parents who seemed intelligent and should be well acquainted with their children's bent of mind. But I thought then, as I proved later, that the lads had never dreamed of turning the stolen goods into money. The magistrates took the view suggested by the parents, who exhibited real distress at the trouble and disgrace in which they had become involved. The lads were lectured severely, advised to refrain from attending picture-shows, and ordered to enter into recognisances for their future good behaviour and pay the costs of the proceedings. They were then discharged.

Had my own view been taken by the Bench, the decision would probably have been much the same. I believed that desire for adventure was the sole root of the matter.

Getting the six lads together in my room, I found, as I expected, that a sensational film had

suggested, as a sensational book might have suggested, a crude plan for escaping from the trammels and conventions of life in a civilised community. They had formed a rough notion of taking up their abode on a wild and desolate moor a few miles away from the town. They had a visionary idea of building a hut there. An opportunity for acquiring a stock of provisions occurred unexpectedly. The proprietor of a "lock-up" grocer's shop was observed to leave his premises insecurely fastened one night, and a handcart was standing prominently in the yard of the premises.

It at once occurred to one of the boys that here was the opportunity of a lifetime. Their project of forming a camp after the manner of the Far West had hung fire largely owing to an absence of provisions, rifles, and ammunition; also the wherewithal to obtain them. The provisions at any rate might now be secured. Until a chance came for acquiring rifles and ammunition, these could lie in the empty dilapidated house the lads had seized.

The idea was communicated to the rest of the party. In a couple of minutes an insecure padlock had been removed from the back door, which they opened; the cart was drawn up and hastily loaded with whatever the lads could lay their hands on. Then the door was closed again, the lock replaced, and the cart wheeled off in high excitement. They were within a hundred yards of their destination when a constable pounced on them. He was of an objectionably inquisitive turn of mind.

"What have you got there?" he asked. "Where are you taking that stuff to?"

They told him where they were going, but he was not satisfied, wanting to know next, "Where have you got it from?"

The method of dealing with obstacles of this sort in the Far West had been fully explained by the film, but the boys had no firearms. It seemed

good to them, therefore, to run away. The constable, knowing their names and where they dwelt, and realising that to pursue would only be to demonstrate his own inferior running powers while leaving the plunder to the mercy of dishonest passers-by, wisely trundled the cart to the local police station. Having made it secure, he obtained assistance, and going leisurely to the boys' homes, conveyed them all to be confronted with their spoil in the presence of an inspector of police. It was easy to ascertain then all necessary particulars as to the shop entered and to complete the case for the prosecution.

A boy whom the Bench had regarded as ring-leader because he was older and much taller than the rest, turned out to be anything but that. The captain of the party was the youngest lad, a short, thick-set, dark-eyed, mischievous-looking rascal of thirteen. His was the grand plan of a settlement on the moor. He had drawn up a list of requirements in the way of provisions and munitions. The temporary occupation of the untenanted house was his inspiration. It was his brain that had grasped the possibilities offered by the grocer's carelessness. I am not certain but that, had his genius directed the campaign throughout, the police officer would have been outwitted. He was relegated to giving a hand in pushing the cart from behind, however, when the march to the empty house began. And you cannot very well think out and carry into effect rapid plans for defeating constables when your head is bent down and you are fully occupied in straining at pushing a heavy load uphill, and innocent of a suspicion of danger.

The remembrance of getting caught in that ignominious fashion was humiliating to Master Reginald.

"I did feel a fool," he said, "sweating and

straining there behind the cart, and then looking up and seeing the 'bobby.' It was that silly goat," indicating the tall youth, "what spoilt everything. He was reckoning to keep a lookout. He said I'd had my turn in the shop. And that's how he looked out—ran us right into a 'bobby'!"

He frankly admitted that it was well they were caught, as otherwise a gunsmith's shop would next have been the scene of a burglarious attempt. Their arrest, by stirring up irreconcilable dissensions among members of the party, caused the abandonment of the whole plan of camping on the moor. They went to work in the hated humdrum occupations of city trades, but continued to dream of escape.

The tall boy was the first to take flight. He got me to obtain his parents' consent to his taking a situation I was able to secure for him in the engine-room of a liner, and went off, leaving his old companions very envious of his fortune in going to "foreign parts." He was happy in his new calling, and apt at learning to be useful in his work. He has been several times commended for the manner in which he has discharged his duties under excitement generated by the unpleasantly manifested presence of submarine pirates threatening the liner's safety with shell and torpedo. On one occasion, after putting into port, a portion of the crew declined, on the ground of ill-health, to face the danger again. This is what he thinks of that sort of conduct:—

"The skulks, pretending to be poorly! They ought to be poorly, showing the white feather like that. They want drowning. What would become of Old England if there were many like them? If I'd my way I'd put all such-like, and all strikers, and every man afraid to do his bit, on a desert island,

and make them fetch what they wanted for themselves."

This is not a bad idea of duty; and I like to see contempt for those who shirk it even in a lad of seventeen.

But he was beaten as a patriot by Master Reginald, who followed him to sea after an interval of three months. I had much trouble to get this lad's parents to consent to his taking service on a steamer engaged in the Indian trade. He was in the Indian Ocean when the *Emden* was engaged in her commerce-destroying career, and his ship had several narrow escapes. He chanced to be at an Australian port when the first Australasian Contingent sailed, and he exhausted his last penny in buying comforts for those splendid troops. Then he became restless. The *Emden* was caught. Von Spee's squadron was sunk. There was no danger in the oceans his ship was wont to traverse. It was deadly dull hearing of gloriously dangerous enterprises in which he could not share. He was glad when his ship set out on its return to England; disappointed beyond words when the Suez and Mediterranean were left in turn without a breath of danger; delighted beyond measure when an enemy submarine was sighted in the Channel. He regarded himself as favoured above most lads when his eager offer to serve in the stokehold was accepted, and toiled to increase the ship's speed till perspiration streamed from every pore of his body. By clever seamanship and high speed the ship escaped. He came up grimy and laughing when the danger was over. The captain thanked him and others for their cheerful and capable service. He was startled.

"Why, sir," he enquired, "what else could we have done? We weren't going to let that beggar nail us!"

There was no trouble with strikers on that ship.

A lofty conception of patriotism as something every man is proud to show; an inability to understand why anxiety merely to discharge duty should merit praise, and a British determination never to give in to an enemy without a stern effort to defeat him—these are contagious. Reginald was fortunate in having a captain capable of provoking the contagion; but the captain was fortunate also in having Reginald to assist in promoting it among his fellows.

In an English port he met one of his old raiding companions, who had also been at sea, and they compared notes. Reuben had a story to tell which made Reginald feel that his life had been tame indeed. Reuben's ship had been chased by a German cruiser from Rio de Janeiro to Cape Horn, and had only escaped by hugging the coast and navigating dangerous channels. Dwelling with keen relish on those exciting days, Reuben lauded his captain as the finest seaman who ever sailed. Reginald would not admit that.

"Very likely he is a good man," he said, narrating to me what Reuben told him, "but he's not a patch on ours. You see, we never had much of a chance to show what our captain's like. That *Emden* now: she tried to trap us with her wireless, but our captain was too cute. She tried it on four or five times, but it didn't come off once; we easily kept out of her way. If she'd started after us we'd have given her a run for three thousand miles."

Perhaps: Reginald's ship would have had to possess the advantage of a long start, though, since the *Emden's* speed was at least ten knots greater. Still it's pleasant to see such confidence as his in his captain and his ship. Keeping Britain's flag flying in far distant waters, that jovial ship's company maintain their splendid service to this day.

The fourth member of the party of youthful

amateur burglars to go to sea was one Ezra. He had the good fortune when the war broke out to be engaged in a ship carrying meat from the Argentine, and saw great fun in steaming on dark nights without lights, and when daylight came, in looking sharply out for half-dreaded, half-hoped-for enemy vessels. The ship's wireless rendered the crew good service, and all dangers in distant waters were averted. Nearer home, lurking pirate craft were a constant menace, but these also were escaped by a vigilant captain commanding a willing and courageous crew who continue to ply their indispensable calling.

Of the two remaining lads there is little to say. Their parents would not allow them to go to sea, and they settled down to render good service ashore when the great day came. After working long hours in helping to produce shell they spend their spare time as instructors of boy scouts, seeking generally to fit themselves and others for whatsoever the future may demand.

It is always a perplexity to me how it comes about that many very plain, tame, sober parents are blessed with particularly lively sons. Talking of her only lad, a roguish, laughing, wilful scamp of fifteen, never in a situation and never out of a scrape for six consecutive days, one sorely puzzled mother remarked to me—

“My husband says he can't make out where he gets his tricks from. He's not like either of us; and none of my husband's people or mine either are a bit like him. It does seem strange. My husband says I must have bred back.”

I was incompetent to offer an opinion on the interesting speculation as to whether the good woman had reproduced a type of some long-forgotten ancestor, but it was obvious that the lad

was entirely different in character from both his father and mother, be the cause whatsoever. The father was a steady, plodding workman, of no great brilliance, but most reliable. He had been in one situation since leaving school thirty-five years before. The mother, a domestic servant before her marriage, confessed to two places, but explained that her first mistress died, and she was in her last post as housemaid for eleven years. The longest stay William Arthur had ever had in any of the twenty-two situations he had tried was six days.

It was not altogether his fault. He would not have given up the places himself. The various masters he had failed to appreciate his services. His first situation as a confectioner's errand-boy, for example, suited him well enough. When he got fighting with the butcher's boy, and the butcher's boy clumsily tumbled into the baskets they had set down for the fray, mixing beef-steak and mutton-chops with cream puffs and jam tarts in the plentiful dust of the roadway — though William Arthur carefully collected his pastries, and, after wiping them on his coat, delivered them where he was instructed, he was nevertheless asked to instantly resign his post. The butcher's boy could take his steak and chops, wash them under a convenient water-tap, and deliver them without any complaint.

When he put on a wall the parcel containing a suit of clothes the tailor, who was his next employer, entrusted to him for delivery at a customer's house, how was William Arthur to know that a lurking thief would snatch it while he was trying a telegraph messenger's bicycle? Yet he got dismissed for that. In his next place, with a fish and game dealer, he was never told that he might not break off chunks of ice for carrying about with him for placing down the back of other youths' necks, neither was he forbidden to

feed the cats of the neighbourhood on fresh salmon. But he had to go for meddling with the ice and the salmon all the same.

It was rank bad luck which caused him to be unable to stay with a barber as lather-boy. The shop door was open on a warm day, when a passing lad who owed him payment for attentions in the ice age burst in and gave a playful surprise blow at William Arthur as he was lathering the face of a somewhat testy customer. He certainly did not mean to dab the lather-brush into both eyes of the customer, but his master and the customer alike made as much fuss as if he did.

After keeping his fourteenth birthday, William Arthur was fortunate in obtaining a start at work he imagined would suit him admirably—in a coal mine. On the fifth day he mischievously tampered with an electric switch, and wrought havoc in the mine, besides endangering the lives of many men and lads in the pit. He was brought before a Court on a charge of wilful damage, ordered to enter into recognisances for future good behaviour, and placed under my supervision for three years.

He still hankered after pit work. I got him a start at another colliery. He went on steadily there for three days, then interfered with a set of loaded waggons, starting them off before the road was clear and causing a tremendous upset, in which his own situation at that colliery was lost.

I have met with not a few pickles in my time, but none who gave me more trouble than William Arthur during the following twelve months. He was all the more difficult to deal with inasmuch as he got into all his scrapes from pure mischief—never from crime—and always came up smiling, no matter what happened. I tried him in a brickyard, feeling that he could work no ill there. I forgot the engine which prepared the clay. He was dis-

missed after six days for wrecking that with his meddling.

Then he informed me that he would like a place as a page-boy, and that a lady had offered to engage him as such. I saw the lady for the purpose of explaining why I feared he would scarcely suit her. She thought me hard on the lad, and gave him a trial for two days, after which she decided that as she wished to possess something whole in the way of crockery and glass she must part with her page. According to his own story, William Arthur was not really to blame here. The breakages were caused by a cat. He had no idea how much afraid it was of a dog he brought into the house from next door. No one was more surprised than he to see the cat leaping from table to table sweeping cups and saucers, plates and dishes, glasses and ornaments to the floor, in a frantic attempt to reach an open window.

A property repairer in a small way of business thought the lad might suit him, and gave him a chance at my request. The work upon which William Arthur was engaged was in a lonely situation. He seemed to be the only lad within miles. Finding no playmates, he naturally tried to make up for that deficiency at the expense of the irritable old bricklayer whom he was supposed to help, and was much amused in watching that workman's hourly efforts to find this tool or that which his valuable young assistant had carefully hidden. That particular job taking an unconscionably long time to complete, the property repairer felt after three days' experience of William Arthur that his business stood to prosper better without the lad's services.

There was no end to my attempts to find the kind of situation for which the boy would do, until a certain skipper who had rendered me many a former service took him off my hands. My

relief was unspeakable. For I had not merely failed for twelve months to get the lad satisfactorily settled in honest employment,—I had tired out more than two or three employers. Their experience of William Arthur caused them to have no vacancies when I applied for situations on behalf of lads whom they feared might be like him. I had only to hawk this genius about long enough, and every master I knew would assuredly close his doors to my nominees for ever.

After eighteen months on a schooner he called on me with the same laughing, roguish face, but with a frame much taller and broader. He seemed to have touched at some port of all five continents, and was delighted with a sailor's life.

I was anxious to know how the crew had managed to escape shipwreck with him aboard, and asked him how many accidents he had been responsible for on the voyage.

"Oh," he replied, "they've knocked that sort of thing out of me. I touched one or two things I'd no business with at first, but they soon learnt me better."

"If there'd been a back door for me to slip out of I should have been home many a time in the first month. I got what for, I can tell you, sir. But it did me good, and I found out how to have a bit of fun in a sensible way, like, without doing anything soft."

"It wouldn't do for them to stand the sort of tricks at sea that I used to play ashore. They've ways of learning you that, quick."

There was evidently something painful about this part of his experience, almost forgotten until revived by my question, and which it was well to leave now to slumber for ever. Still it was manifest that, drastic as may have been the measures taken to effect a cure, no resentment lingered in the lad's mind. After ten days at home he told me

he was "sick of holidaying," and anxious to be afloat again.

In January 1915 he wrote this letter to me:—

"We have had rotten luck. We left Japan just before war was declared, so we knew nothing about it for three months. All that time we were messing about in out of way places, and the Germans might have pounced on us any time and sunk our ship before we'd time to find out what they were after. When we did get to know we never saw no fun. We were in seas where there were no Germans then, and when we got back to where there was a bit of danger once, it had passed off 'cos the German ships are at the bottom of the sea. We have to come home soon for a good job. Happen we shall see a bit of life then."

They certainly did see a bit of life, their ship being sunk by an enemy submarine after the crew had been given five minutes to take to the boats. They tossed on a stormy sea for thirty hours in intense cold and drizzling rain, and were picked up half dead by a patrol boat and brought to port.

In less than a week every member of the crew was at sea again, William Arthur sailing with his old skipper on an ancient barque which would have seen no further service but for national necessity commandeering every tub capable of making a voyage with reasonable safety.

The usually prosaic business of sailing from England to Norway and back for the purpose of exchanging coal for pit props had been glorified by manifold dangers into romantic poetry. Here is an account of one voyage:—

"We saw a German submarine making for us, and wished we'd a gun. It seemed all up. Just then a little steamer hove in sight, and was seen by the submarine, which thought the steamer better game than us,

and made for that. The steamer saw the enemy and made a run for it. We gave a great cheer, and you bet we watched. The race was away from us, but we made out that the steamer was leaving the pirate behind. When they were out of sight we noticed a boat with five men in it about a mile to starboard, and saw some wreckage floating about. We picked the boat up and its crew, and found the pirate had done for their trawler while they were fishing a couple of hours before. We kept on the course the steamer had taken, trying to get away. We wanted to give a hand to the crew if the pirates should sink the ship. As it got dusk we saw a British destroyer tearing towards us like mad. Then we saw fire flash from its guns and heard shots. And we knew the steamer was all right and the pirate driven off. It ought to be at the bottom for good; but I'm afraid it isn't. The beggars dive when they see danger five hundred miles off—any mortal thing to keep their skins whole. An unarmed boat is fair game for them. They won't tackle a boat with guns if it's no bigger than a cockleshell."

Norwegian waters were infested with enemy mines.

"We saw two Norwegian ships strike," he says in another letter, "and both went down before we could get up to them, but we picked four men from one and three from another out of the water. One man died as soon as we got him aboard. I never saw anything like the sight he was in my life—his head all smashed in by the explosion. We kept a wonderful sharp look-out, I can tell you, sir, and we got through the mine-

field all right. We left the coal and took in the pit props, and felt our way back as well as we could. All we want is a gun. We do want that, though, to drive off pirates. We'll risk the mines and torpedoes willing enough. But we should like a shot or two. It isn't very nice having to stand like wax-dolls when one of the beggars pops up, and you do feel soft leaving your ship because *they* tell you—*them*! But what can you do when you've nought to fight with? I reckon they haven't guns enough to spare us any; so the chaps in the gunworks had better quit drinking and make overtime so as we can have a chance. If we don't fetch pit props, they can't get coal; and if there's no coal, there aren't going to be many guns or shells made. None of us are talking of chucking our job, though, whether we get guns or not. We're going on till we've won."

Certainly William Arthur is exceedingly useful at sea, great as were the failings he exhibited ashore. His parents naturally follow his movements with the keenest interest. They are all the more proud of him because he is of higher mettle than they, and because they find it difficult to understand his love of danger. "Let's hope he'll come back all right, sir," was the last thing they said to me concerning him, and all who read his short biography will share their hope.

Rufus, another lad in the mercantile marine, came by that name when he went to sea after being in trouble from picking up a quantity of scrap iron. It is remarkable how many things he managed to pick up. His finds included, besides the scrap iron, two saws, a wheelbarrow, a pair of steps, a door mat, a lawn-mower, and

a pair of garden shears. According to his own story, he regarded all the articles as of "no use to anybody," although he found himself able to turn all into money at various second-hand dealers' shops. The magistrates saw him time after time, and heard him make his familiar and idle excuse about thinking the particular article it was alleged he had stolen to be "no good" till it grew monotonous. It was felt that he was a suitable candidate for Borstal treatment, and at eighteen years old he was sent to take his trial at Quarter Sessions.

His mother pleaded hard with the Recorder to give him another chance, and prevailed, his father becoming surety for him. I will confess that I was disappointed with the decision. I had known the youth, and done my best to help him for four years. He had convinced me that he would never be saved from a criminal career except he had the advantage of being helped to reform under the admirable Borstal discipline. As it turned out I was wrong.

The boy's home was clean and neat. The father came first there, but the mother was a good second; it was by no means a case of the lad ruling the house, though he was an only child. The only fault I had to find with the home was that it was locked up from early morning until six at night, both parents going out to work; and when the mother returned she was too busily occupied with her household duties to have much time to devote to her son, who came to be seldom in the house. The father was a member of a political club, to which he went as soon as he had swallowed his tea, night by night; hence he saw little of the lad. Apart from bestowing what Rufus termed "a good leathering" upon him as occasion seemed to require, he took small notice

of the boy, even leaving me to find situations from time to time for his son, although he could have done much better in that direction than I.

When the misdeeds of Rufus brought his parents to the Police Court, they invariably had the satisfaction of hearing the police testify to their own excellent character and to the satisfactory nature of their home. They were honestly unable to account for their boy's pranks. They allowed him reasonable pocket-money. They could not conceive what need he had to pick things up. No doubt the reason for it was that he had too much time on his hands. Not being wanted in the house when he had finished work, he patronised places of amusement, and felt it necessary to devise some means for augmenting a paying capacity more than sufficient for the need of any lad whose home was really home to him, but not enough for one who grew to think that he must pay for entrance to a place where he might spend a large portion of every night.

His father gave him the customary thrashing when he got him home from Quarter Sessions. His mother as usual made him wince with her biting tongue. But I hoped for no reformation from those oft-tried remedies. I like to see a little balance. So often it is all callousness, lack of interest, or severity; or else, all excuses, all wet-nursing, all lack of ability to believe *my* boy can possibly do wrong, or ought for any fault to receive the rod. A judiciously blended type of treatment is usually required. Rufus would have got that had he gone to Borstal. He never would have obtained it here.

To my astonishment, however, the father sacrificed a day's work and pay, in addition to that lost through attendance at Quarter Sessions, for the purpose of coming to me to see if I

could possibly arrange for the boy to be sent away. It is a singular fact that parents who strain every nerve to prevent a lad from being sent to a reformative institution will now and then go to much trouble to get him packed off to a place where no guarantee exists that he will be anything like as well trained or cared for. An advantage was gained from this proceeding here, inasmuch as it turned out that the country was spared the expense of the lad's detention for a lengthy period in a State institution. But of course the parents never for a moment thought of saving expense to the State.

Rufus was a strong youth, a miniature of his father, one of the most powerfully built men I ever saw. It was easy to get him a berth as a trimmer. The tramp steamer on which he sailed was chartered by an American owner, and was not due to return to an English port for a considerable time. The name Rufus, at once bestowed upon him by his shipmates as a compliment to his fiery-hued hair, occasioned a fight or two, but it stuck to him, and he came to adopt it at last. With no incentive to pick things up now, he dropped that unfortunate habit. Working "like a black," he earned the high opinion of engineer and captain alike, and returned to England with a clean record after two years' absence.

The dangers of navigation caused a heavy rise in seamen's wages shortly after the declaration of war, but Rufus declares that he would work willingly, if need existed, for a shilling a month rather than "show the white feather" at a time like this, and I believe him.

His last letter tells of bringing a heavy cargo of wheat from the Argentine, "to help to keep things going at home."

"We had a deal of bother after we left port," he says; "somebody must have been tampering. Fires kept breaking out all over the boat. I only wish we could have laid hold on the mongrel that did it. He would have had his blooming neck wrung, sharp. If it had not been for the fires the voyage would have been all right. There isn't a German ship on the ocean; so we hadn't to bother about any danger from outside of the ship; but it's fair rotten to wonder whether there isn't a wrong one aboard.

"When we got to St George's Channel, just at daylight, another game began. We had been warned that pirates were about, and we got steam up and zig-zagged to make it as hard as we could for the beggar to torpedo us. All at once a shell burst on our deck without hitting anybody. I was taking a breather, and saw everything. There was a great submarine, bigger than I thought could be built, about a mile away. It went on blazing away at us like anything.

"'We must run for it, my lads,' shouts the captain to us; 'get every ounce out of them old engines!' So I hustled off back to the stokehold to my mates, and we laid fires on like hell. And didn't the old girl run! We left that blooming submarine looking fair silly, I can tell you, and we got home all safe.

"We must have had a traitor on board, or else a spy. Them fires didn't start themselves. And one of my mates says as when he went on deck for a breath of fresh air just before daylight, as we came into the Channel, he's sure he saw lights flashing from one of our port-holes. Some dirty spy would be signalling, you can be sure.

"There were three chaps we didn't reckon much to among our crew. We couldn't swear to anything as any of them did right-down wrong, or else he'd have gone over-board, quick. But we're going back without them three. The police are asking two or three questions about them. I hope they'll be shot, anyhow. Not one of them bothered about doing a stroke of work more than he was fair forced, and they were everlastingly haggling. That shows a man's no Englishman, haggling about how much he does at a time like this, and how much money he gets! All such-like ought to be shot, I say. Ten to one they're more on the German side than ours, if they're not out and out German spies."

Rufus may have crude ideas showing a lack of education and a narrowness of view; but at least he is doing his duty.

And so is Peppercorn, another youth who owes his name to his shipmates. It is an appropriate name, aptly suggesting liveliness of disposition in small bulk.

I had the honour of Peppercorn's acquaintance for five years before he went to sea. It mattered little when or where I saw him, he had usually a scrap of blue paper to show me with a grinning face; but anyhow he respected a scrap of paper sufficiently to turn up periodically at the Police Court to answer the summons. Nothing, indeed, ever prevented him from showing his respect for the Bench unless he was unluckily serving a short term of imprisonment in default of paying a previous fine.

His offences were always either pitch-and-toss or else card-playing in the streets. With other lads he found himself possessed of a few minutes'

leisure time between the publication of various editions of the evening newspaper which he sold as his means of livelihood. He regarded himself as a godsend to sundry police officers who patrolled the beat he haunted. He was convinced that they sought and found promotion in the force by the easy path of reporting him once a month for trifling misdemeanours. The police, on the other hand, regarded him as an unmitigated young nuisance. They suspected his honesty, and his "cheeky, soft-brazen, outdacious ways" annoyed them greatly.

The magistrates were puzzled what to do with the youth. He contrived to steer safely past the Reformatory age, although his convictions were numerous before he entered his seventeenth year. There was nothing to be done with him then except to inflict fines perpetually, with imprisonment in default of payment. He could not be sent to a Borstal Institution except for an indictable offence. And in spite of police suspicion nothing grave was ever proved against him. I believe he was perfectly honest.

Because his was such a wretched way of gaining a living, leading to nowhere except early entrance to the ranks of the unemployables, I had tried many times to get him to take to regular work at a trade. Lack of backing on the part of his parents, added to his own entire satisfaction with newspaper-selling, brought my efforts to nothing. I got him work in a steel manufactory, a flour mill, a coal-mine, and a silver-rolling mill. His longest stay in any of these places was a week. He complained that he found the confinement irksome. I tried him in a job which required that he should help a drayman on his rounds delivering heavy goods, but he was so frequently engaged in conversation with acquaintance he met in every street as to be seldom available to lend a hand at

the work he was engaged to do, and after three days the drayman decided that he could manage without him. So he went back to the newspapers. He could earn more money in that way than any employer could afford to pay him as value for services in any trade at the outset. He loved a life untrammelled by discipline and a master, and he was a favourite with a whole host of lads who shared his companionship day by day.

As often occurs, however, he found his earning capacity to grow less as he got nearer to manhood, while his requirements became more numerous. Food and lodging were not extravagant items of expenditure, and his easy-going parents were content so long as he maintained the contribution of ten shillings a week which he had usually paid since his fifteenth year. But cigarettes laid his income under a growing tribute. He became miserable unless he could see his way to ten penny packets a day. The fines, too, became increasingly stiff. The rags which used to be helpful in his profession—which used to wonderfully assist the little urchin to dispose of his papers to customers who hoped by purchasing his stock to secure his early shelter at home from the cold and wet of the streets—had to give place to reasonably decent clothing. If the newsvendor of nineteen years old is in rags, the average man's sympathy is of a sort which prompts the refusal of patronage and suggests a "Go, work!"

Things reached a crisis during a period of bad trade when the suggestion of work grew more insistent. Peppercorn came to me with his griefs. He was "hardly addling¹ anything," he said; there were two fines owing; it was winter; the flat-racing season was over; there was no betting news to make his papers sell, and he must needs

¹ He meant, earning.

go barefoot for lack of boots or clogs. His old customers had turned their backs on him, and a variety of causes operated to prevent his obtaining new ones, although primarily he was handicapped by the competition of younger lads.

I reminded him how unsuccessful my previous efforts on his behalf had proved; but he declared he had often wished he "hadn't been such a fool." He was willing now "to stick at any sort of regular job." If I would only provide him with another chance I should have no cause for regret.

I believed the lad, and wished I saw an opportunity of assisting him to employment. But the outlook was dark. Skilled workmen and experienced labourers were alike out of work by the thousand. The only possibility of an opening was at sea, and wages were low and berths difficult to obtain on ships because of extraordinary depression in the general labour market.

When the difficulty of the situation had been set out to him he still begged for "any sort of a job anywhere." He professed a strong desire to go to sea, but he was not at all particular what the work was, or where. I fixed a day for him to call again, wrote to a friend at one of our ports, and received an offer of a berth as trimmer.

The wages were low; the crew were mostly foreigners; the work was hard. I was not proud of the offer I was able to pass on to the lad when he called. It must be accepted or declined at once. If accepted, he must be aboard ship the next day. I rather expected that the opportunity, such as it was, would slip away before he could make up his mind. Much to my surprise he jumped at the chance, and displayed such feverish anxiety to be gone that I had to pack him off the same afternoon.

At the railway station I found the reason for his haste. As he held his merry face out of the

window of his compartment he remarked to me with delicious enjoyment—

“I’ve done ’em one this time, anyhow. I owe ’em thirty bob for fines, and there’s two summonses out against me for to-morrow.”

“You’d better not be in a hurry to come back,” I advised; “they’ll take a warrant out for your arrest, and the moment you show your face here again they’ll have you.”

“They’ll never have me no more, sir,” he declared with emphasis; “I’m sick of that lot. I’ve been a regular mug for ’em. I’m going to do myself a bit of good now. It’ll not be my fault if I don’t get on.”

“Well,” I said in parting, “do your best; write to me now and then. Don’t desert your ship and find your way back home in a month or two. I’ll write and tell you when it’s safe for you to take a holiday with your friends here.”

“Won’t them coppers be diddled,” were his last words. “I’d give a trifle, if I had ought, to see old ‘Tin Hat’ going among the other lads trying to fish it out of them where I am.”

He was gone; and my first business was to intimate to the constable whom he called ‘Tin Hat’ (a nickname bestowed because it was considered by the lads that the officer required artificial means to keep his brains in position) that he need waste no further energy in seeking to discover Peppercorn’s whereabouts. An excellent magistrates’ clerk whom I interviewed later promised most readily that no trouble should be made over unpaid fines if the youth would but stay away and do properly for twelve months. My final request of a kindly chief constable that the summonses for hearing next day should be withdrawn was equally successful. Altogether I fear that Peppercorn would have greatly disapproved of my afternoon’s work,

notwithstanding that I sought his own good in doing it.

For, six weeks later, I got this letter from him:—

“My word, talk about working: it’s regular slavery. I’d no idea it would be like this; it’s awful. Why, I haven’t had a dry thread on me any time after I’ve been in the stokehole a minute! If it hadn’t been for thinking of Tin Hat looking all over the shop for me I don’t know what I’d have done. But that’s ’livened me up. I’ve laughed many a time to think of him going to our house and bothering my mother, and then going to Tommy, and the rest of the lads, and saying, ‘I’ll make you tell me where he’s gone to’; going fair off his head for fear of losing a stripe, and not finding me when he has run his blood to water.

“There’s a rum lot on this ship; only three Englishmen besides me and the captain, and one of them’s a Scotchman. They’ve nicknamed me Peppercorn, because they say I’m little and hot. I have to work mostly with blacks, and I take ’em a bit of a ta-ta now and then, just for a bit of fun, like. They get rare and mad. The captain says I must mind, else they’ll be sticking a knife in me.

“I don’t know whether I should reign long at this job if it wasn’t that I’m fed up with Tin Hat and that set; and there seems to be no other way for me to get a living honest like just now. I reckon the magistrates would be rare and mad when I didn’t turn up for them last two summonses, and I shall get it thick if I come back. Happen I shall get more used to this life in a bit. I’m not much gone on it so far.”

He was allowed to labour under the delusion that the justices were highly indignant at his

non-appearance, and that "Tin Hat" was scouring the district for him, leaving no stone unturned lest he should lose a precious stripe. In a few months he came to write more cheerfully of his work. By the time I felt it safe to tell him he might return home for awhile he had lost all desire to resume life ashore. After three years he became an assistant-steward on a liner, and nothing would then induce him to relinquish his calling.

The liner on which he served when war broke out was requisitioned for government service in the Mediterranean and Ægean Seas. Peppercorn was a ready volunteer for any post of danger. His receptive mind had grasped, during his eight years at sea, almost all that is worth knowing in a sailor's calling. Writing of the landing of troops to storm the Turkish land positions in the Dardanelles, he shows commendable versatility in turning to an occupation not recently his own. He says:—

"I've been in a boat running backwards and forwards night and day to take the soldiers ashore, and had a many narrow shaves. We've got all of 'em landed now that's here; but there's a lot more coming, they say. All we have to do just now is to keep fetching the wounded. They are a brave lot. They never wince; not if they've got legs or arms off, or if they're riddled with bullets, or blinded, or the tops of their heads blown in, or their faces smashed up! Very often they're singing and cheering, and they're all wanting to get back quick.

"We do all we can for 'em, and the doctors and R.A.M.C. men are fine. Two or three of my mates have been shot while they were helping in the boats, but I've dodged the Turks up to now. I'm not very big, you know, and they're not very grand shots. I

stand up and wave my handkerchief to 'em every time we're getting out of reach, just to say ta-ta. Some of our fellows don't like it; they say as it makes the Turks mad, and that's why they're making an extra special of our boat—we are getting about ten times as much notice as we ought to do by rights."

Was this boisterous light-heartedness responsible for what transpired later? I had this letter from one of Peppercorn's mates:—

"We were landing reinforcements on the 26th of May, when Peppercorn, as we called him, was struck by a shell. I was hit by a bullet, but I was not hurt anything like he was. I won't attempt to describe how he was injured. It would do no good. And he didn't seem to mind.

"He said to me, 'Just write to Mr Holmes, and let him know as they managed it at last, accidental like; he'll tell them at home. Tell him as I was game to the last, and not a bit frightened. I don't know as I could have done any better; I should have liked to stay till old England had won, but she'll manage without me. They won't get no extra ha'pence selling war-specials because I'm done. But that's no matter. It wouldn't do me any good to have my name in print, and Tin Hat wouldn't get no stripe for it. Not but what I'd like him to have one now; for I've no grudge against him, and happen he never did no more than his duty, like me. You tell Mr Holmes that; he'll understand.'

"He would not be satisfied till I'd written it down, and read it over to him. Then he said, 'That seems all right; I'll have a bit of sleep now!' Two minutes later he was gone. We all miss him ever so much; he was the life and soul of our party, always happy and

so good-natured that he would never have had a sovereign a week after drawing his pay if he had lived to be sixty. We buried him at sea; and we all had a good cry."

So Peppercorn won what he valued more highly than glowing tributes in the Press—the love of those among whom he served.

More than that: when I told his ancient enemy the constable how he died, and what thoughts were in his mind at the end, the officer brushed something suspiciously like a tear from his cheek, and cleared his throat before remarking—

"He worn't a bad lad for all his devilment; I wish some of the others would go and do as well."

The wish was prophetic. Eight of his old companions, who had uselessly held back doing nothing of value for Britain, hearing of Peppercorn's end, enlisted in the new army. Their resolution was stimulated somewhat by the pride of Peppercorn's parents in their son, whose "dying like a man" was rightly held to be an example for all to copy.

VIII.

WITH THE TERRITORIALS.

A PHILOSOPHIC working man once declared to me—

“Talk about drink being responsible for nine-tenths of the crime in England. It’s rubbish; idleness causes a lot more crime than ever drink does. Many a good workman likes his glass, but not one in fifty is a worse fellow for that. When I read in the newspaper of a man telling the tale that he stole something, or assaulted somebody, or neglected his family, because he got fond of drink, I say to myself, Aye, lad, and there’s something else the matter with you. You’re idle.”

Without going the whole length with this philosopher, I agree that vices often mistaken for the causes of crime are frequently only growths of the original root of offence, idleness.

The first question I am in the habit of putting to myself in trying to help in any case is, What useful work can be found for this person to do? If his whole time is being wasted he must be forced to take up regular employment, otherwise he will do little good. If his working hours are already usefully employed, attention must be paid to his manner of spending his spare time. With no healthy pastime to follow, caring nothing for

cricket, football, bowls, or any other outdoor recreation; with no hobby, no possible mechanical invention to think out, no garden to potter about in, no pigs or fowls to look after—not even a pigeon,—and caring nothing for dogs or cats; bored to death by the very idea of solid reading, with no ear for music and no artistic sense of any sort, the spare time of a lad is often spent in hooliganism, and of a man in drinking, gambling, or impure living. When the spare time of a woman or girl is never occupied in useful employment, inordinate vanity leading to vicious courses is frequently developed; but more usually the penalty of idleness here is that wretchedness of home life which is so copious a fount of our social ills.

This being my experience, I have made it a rule first to see that the working hours of all who have come under my care are fully occupied with honest labour, and next to stimulate the adoption of some healthy and interesting spare-time recreation. Having usually found that the more useful the recreation tended to be, the more lasting was its hold upon the person adopting it, I have steadily recommended pastimes offering a possible combination of pleasure and profit.

I watched the inauguration of the Boys' Brigade movement with intense interest and sympathy, fully believing it to be capable of working the social salvation of thousands of our lads. The pleasure of membership would, I was sure at the outset, take second place in the lads' minds when they appreciated the profit arising from manly teaching and discipline and drill. I have not been disappointed. Hundreds of lads whom I have known have been wonderfully helped by this admirable movement. Many are now fighting for their country, some having already laid down their lives. Many more are training with the

new armies, while others, incapable of military service, or not to be spared from their trades, are cheerfully working a hundred hours every week to keep their brothers on sea and at the front supplied with munitions of war. The Boys' Brigade had taken a worthy part in the work of silently preparing Britain for her mighty enterprise.

It was natural that many lads should pass on from membership of the Boys' Brigade to training with the Territorial forces, and for my own part I encouraged that to the fullest extent in my power. I am in communication at this moment with sixty-three fellows serving in Territorial battalions with the expeditionary force in France and Flanders, and in the Dardanelles, who are old Boys' Brigade lads. What regular employment of working hours and intelligent use of leisure time has done for them it has done also for men who came into my hands unemployed and at loose ends. But in their case the helpful drill, instruction, and discipline was gained in some branch of the Territorial Army. Seventy-eight men who have served or are serving in the Dardanelles, in France, or in Belgium, became Territorials from five to two years ago at my own suggestion, and were quickly transformed from comparative slouchers into men whose appearance kindled a feeling of respectful pride. It is of some of these men that I am about to tell.

I was visited in July 1914 by a fine-looking fellow who evidently found much that was agreeable in life. He was making one of his periodical calls. For six years he had seldom let a month pass without looking me up: such was his gratitude for a helping hand extended when he was in sore need of a lift out of the slough into which he had fallen.

It was just a case of giving way to the temptation of idleness. Until he was eighteen years old

he worked well. Then he had an accident. As he was engaged on a job underneath a crane, the chain snapped and a heavy ingot it was raising crashed down, breaking his leg. When the limb was again able to bear his weight, and while he was enjoying a period of convalescence before resuming work, he had the misfortune to fall in with a man who obtained a livelihood by trickery and fraud. This man persuaded him that it was a rather foolish thing to gain a living by hard work, and being "a bit of a scholar," my friend Ben was induced to join the scamp in what Ben thought would prove a highly successful commercial venture.

It consisted of offering for sale by Dutch auction an assortment of cheap flash jewellery. Sometimes an empty shop was taken in a busy city; more frequently operations were conducted at a stall in a country market. The procedure was always the same. A gaping crowd was collected, and by various arts induced to believe that something valuable was to be had for nothing. Watches, clocks, and articles of jewellery were sold and the purchase-money returned to seemingly genuine customers at the opening of every sale. It was explained by the cheap-jack that his confidence in the excellence of his wares was such that he knew the advertisement he would secure through the medium of these gift-goods would amply repay his extravagance by crowding his mart with eager customers. As a matter of fact, the goods of course passed into the hands of accomplices.

During the period covered by the cheap-jack's generous return of purchase-money, he was alternately urging the crowd to make haste to take advantage of his liberality, and issuing stentorian warnings that each succeeding transaction was the last of that kind. Timid bidders were mean-

while summoning courage to speculate. A few voices, weak and nervous from excitement and inexperience, made unheeded offers from various parts of the assembly. The cheap-jack's seeming indifference confirmed waverers in an opinion that they stood in danger of losing a good thing.

A sample watch was now held up and its merits detailed with fond admiration. It was stated to be worth five guineas, and special attention was called to the fact that it possessed a rolled gold case, which to the average member of the crowd meant one of solid eighteen carat gold. Despite covetous desire, nobody in the crowd could hope for possession at that high figure; the price was obligingly reduced to four, then three, then two guineas, and at last to one, stopping there at about four times its real value. The vendor now expatiated for a few minutes upon the closeness of the hold kept by members of the crowd on their pockets, well knowing that he had, as he intended, bewildered them by the rapid descent of his prices. Then, while they still held back, he made a further contemptuous remark, and pretended to give directions to clear away the watches for that occasion, seeing that the people were insufficiently intelligent to recognise a bargain pushed under their very noses. He would try them with clocks.

But nobody wanted clocks. The whole interest was centred, as he knew, upon "genuine rolled gold watches." His attention was drawn by a capable assistant to the fact that somebody had sent up a guinea. A watch was handed to the purchaser with well-simulated regret. Such generosity was a great concession after so sad an exhibition of lack of appreciation. Another and another and another guinea was sent up from all parts of the crowd, until sometimes a dozen, sometimes as many as five dozen watches were disposed of. In

practically every case the purchaser had a vague notion that his money could be returned, and that he would be allowed to take the watch as a gift for advertising purposes. He could not claim that such an offer had been definitely set out. He went by an impression obtained from what had transpired at the earlier transactions. But he was doomed to disappointment. The curtain had been rung down on that section of the performance when the part was finished. The play now was concerned with extracting money from real customers.

The demand for watches being exhausted, clocks were brought forward, next jewellery, and then ornaments. Buyers of watches which in an incredibly few minutes began to appear to their new possessors as of doubtful value, realising that no purchase-money would be returned to them, departed sadder and wiser to say little even to their closest friends of an experience of which they were not at all proud. Then the cheap-jack came back to his special attraction, to meet with varying success with a new set of patrons.

So the game went on: as one town was worked out, another was found, to be replaced by another when a further move was necessary to keep the pot boiling. Such is the gullibility of the British public that I have never been able to account for the fact that these tricksters find they usually have to abandon their business for intervals of two or three months once every year. I should have thought from what I have seen that they would by moving about find a ready market at all times, for, no matter how barefaced their impostures, they are able to visit any former scene after an absence of two years. Possibly the fraternity have the country mapped out into spheres of influence and do not trespass upon one another's preserves.

It is during these periods of idleness that such rascals blunder into crime. So long as they are content to impose upon the cupidity and ignorance of the public without making demonstrably false representations concerning their goods, they may pursue their traffic in peace. The police have no power to interfere, and rightly so; for no man seeking to obtain a watch for nothing has the slightest intention of using it as a vehicle of advertisement for the vendor, although he well knows that if his own conception of the scheme be right, that is the expectation of the use he will put it to. He is just as guilty of intent to defraud as the cheap-jack is. It is well to let both alone.

But dishonesty begets dishonesty. The cheap-jack forgets settlement days. The wholesale house from which he has obtained his goods becomes tiresome, and finally stops supplies. He tries another wholesale house, and is not always strictly truthful in his representations. Then trouble arises, and he may find his way into a criminal court on a charge of felony.

Something of this sort was experienced by Ben's clever mentor, and after two years Ben found himself involved in consequent criminal proceedings. His partner turned out to have been in trouble before, and received a long sentence of imprisonment, Ben being bound over to be of good behaviour, and ordered to come up for judgment when called upon.

I am not noted for possessing a sharp tongue, but Ben has repeatedly declared that he had the most uncomfortable half-hour of his life while I set out to him the pass which idleness had brought him to. He was little better than a thief; he was fond of intoxicating drink, and of displaying flash jewellery; he was a gambler; he was unutterably selfish. While he knew that his father had been ill then two years, and his mother going out

washing and cleaning to earn a scanty means of livelihood, he had never spared a penny to help at home. There he was, strong, able-bodied, twenty years old, out of work, the employment he had found for two years utterly useless as a recommendation to any honest master. His character for industry, sobriety, and honesty, was gone. Was he not proud of himself? Could he desire anything better? Was it not here demonstrated beyond possibility of argument that it was a foolish thing to seek to gain a living by hard work? Wherefore should he come to me, seeing that I had no experience and less faith in his line, but grovelled in an old-world notion that honest work is the only honourable means of livelihood? What difficulty could make it really hard for a person of his genius to come out of the tightest corner triumphant?

This method of treatment I adopted because Ben had the impertinence to ask for a position as a clerk in an office, an assistant in a shop, or a steward aboard ship. He plainly felt that he ought not to be expected to engage in any work such as would soil his hands. He was too good for that because, forsooth, he had found it possible to live on his wits for a while!

He came to see that in my opinion he might consider himself fortunate if he could secure reinstatement as a labourer in a foundry, thus getting a chance of picking up the threads of industrial employment where he dropped them two years earlier. For a few minutes he hesitated to accept such employment. Would I lend him a shilling to tide him over until next morning? I would not. I would provide him with a week's board and lodging if he saw fit to take to the work I offered. Otherwise he might go to the workhouse. I rather thought it might be well if he did go to the workhouse straightway, since he

seemed bent on getting there eventually. If he thought himself fit for a place of trust he must produce credentials to satisfy a master. He knew he could produce nothing of the sort. Did he think I was going to tell lies on his behalf so as to secure such a position for him? No, there was but one honest way of regaining character—he must win it back by meritorious service.

Because he was caught early enough in the first place, and because he was firmly handled in the second, he went back to the industrial labour for which alone he was at that moment fitted. He had brains; I urged him to spend his evenings at a technical school, and he acquired knowledge there which fitted him for early promotion in his place of employment. When he ceased attending classes he was at a loss to know how to pass his evenings. His parents were poor companions to spend all his spare time with, though he had grown into a most feeling and helpful son. I strongly advised him to become a member of the Territorial force. He took the advice, and thoroughly entered into the possibilities of the scheme, becoming most proficient in all the duties of a citizen soldier, and attracting the notice of an officer who was able to give him a substantial lift in his civilian employment by placing him in a post as foreman at certain great works in the city.

Prospering from the day that he resumed honest labour, Ben was not fond of dwelling upon the past. Drinking, gambling, love of display, inordinate selfishness—all disappeared with his return to the path of simple duty. He was wrong when he put down to my credit all praise for his reformation. That was due to his own latent good sense, to regular employment, and to the spending of spare time usefully in technical school or drilling-ground more than to anything else.

When he called in July he was about to go up with his battalion for the usual annual fortnight's training. War was declared before the camp broke up. The battalion rendered useful service for a while in home defence. After a long period of impatient waiting the men obtained the high privilege of joining their comrades of the regular army in Flanders, and there they proved themselves worthy to rank with the bravest and the best.

Writing to me in June 1915, Ben says:—

“We are getting a bit tired of reading in the newspapers of joy that Italy has come in, and of whining and sneering and grumbling at America. There are enough men in the British empire to finish this job without grovelling for anybody else to help. If they like to join us—these other countries—well and good. But why not our men take their coats off, give over playing, and all set to work and do the thing ourselves? We who are out here don't want to brag. We have just come into this rest-camp after twenty-four of the hardest and most nerve-trying days it is possible to imagine, and to a man we are ready to go through it all again and enjoy it. But we want more men to come and give a hand, and we'd as lief have our own folk from our own empire as anybody. What we don't want is to read about strikes, and anxiety about shells, and attacks on men who are doing all men can do to pull England through. Everybody must buck up and do their best.”

Better occupation that for a man than befooling simple folk out of their money or using criminal means for obtaining a living! Many who have learned to value Ben at the high standard his life for these last six years has set are waiting

to grasp his hand very warmly when he returns. Meanwhile a good many tokens of gratitude and admiration find their way to him and to the noble fellows who fight with him in that battalion.

Among them are others who were once in close touch with me. One, named Bertram, came to know me from foolishly embezzling his employer's money. He had got among a gambling set and found his modest salary as a solicitor's clerk quite inadequate to meet his needs. Love of gambling was suggested by the prosecution as the probable cause of his downfall. It lay deeper than that. Inattention to his duties from giving way to idleness was at the root. He offered an illustration of the truth that "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do."

There is little employment of which a solicitor's clerk is capable when he has lost character unless he can make up his mind to engage in unskilled manual labour. If he choose to tackle work that soils the hands and involves wearing the clothing of an artisan, he starts at once on a road that takes him out of the sphere of old companions of doubtful influence. If, in addition, he have sense and determination to make amends for the past, his path to as good a financial position as he could have hoped for under normal conditions in his old occupation is fairly easy. He is of better education than most of his fellows, he knows how to write a letter; while he cannot compete with a commercial clerk in general office work, he has the rudiments of a knowledge of book-keeping which will fit him for many a departmental post.

Bertram was not greatly fascinated with this view when I placed it before him. He hankered after some more ornamental type of employment. There was no great hurry. His parents were

willing to maintain him for a few weeks. Indeed, his father, a hard-working carter, told me that he thought his son was too good for rough manual labour, being such a clever young man. If I could get Bertram some light post, even within three months, both his parents would be grateful to me, and would gladly carry him over that period.

It is a story I often hear, always with impatience and disgust. Why should parents see anything unseemly about their children sharing their own honest employment, be it whatsoever? Why should they not say that if and when something better can be obtained it may be thankfully accepted, but meanwhile their children must work for their living at anything honest that comes to hand? There are fathers who work and scheme and save to put their boys into positions from which they look down upon their parents in scorn. There are mothers who deny themselves rest and leisure and the simplest luxuries, that their girls may be idle, over-dressed, and utterly useless. Thousands of children in every great town grow up untaught to discharge those simple domestic duties which, by discharging, would so greatly help parents and sweeten home life, while correcting a tendency to self-conceit and assumed superiority. Parents cast about for something which their children will like to do, ignoring the certain fact that few of us had, on setting out to earn our living, the smallest notion what that something was. And if we thought we knew and seemed to get it, the chances are that it has proved disappointing.

I have done many wrong and foolish things, but I have never yet encouraged an idle youth or girl to eat bread hardly earned by parents much less able to work than themselves. In this case, following a general rule, I brushed aside the natural

flattery and excuses of fond parents and went straight for Bertram.

"You want a job," I remarked, "of a sort that I am not likely to meet with. If I do meet with anything that will suit you, I shall take it myself. There will be little work about it, so I can manage the duties in addition to my own, and I can do with the money. Besides, I shall have a double advantage over you. Being twice your age, I shall be more likely for a light job suitable for an old man. Having a character, I shall be given preference for a position of trust. It is not very likely that I can help you to get what you want, you see, and I wouldn't if I could.

"What you are seeking is an idle life. You want to keep on the same game that has brought you to this, and to mix with the same companions. If I help you at all it will be to hard work and to different company, and you will start to-morrow.

"In my opinion, you are at present as idle and worthless as most I have met with. I want to help you to do better. The first step is for you to learn to work. You have attempted little in this line so far, and that little you have done badly. You have come to think it more disgraceful to do manual labour than to meanly beg your bread off your own old parents, whom you ought to be helping, or to steal from your master. The notion is absurd. I must correct it if I can. Will you start labouring work to-morrow or not? It is that or nothing as far as I am concerned."

I was quite prepared for the parents breaking in with excuses and objections before Bertram had time to reply, and pointed out the folly of a man and wife, both turned sixty years old, seeming to regard manual labour, by which they themselves gained an honourable livelihood, as unfit for their son, even while under the cloud his wrong-doing

had brought upon him. They reluctantly withdrew their objections, and he expressed his willingness to start at the work offered, being nettled at the plain speaking which set him down as the vain, idle, mean, dishonest rascal he certainly gave promise of becoming.

He went to assist a man who saw through him at once. The foreman set over both workmen aptly summed up the position when he told me, a few days later, "Tommy knows how to keep the beggar's nose to the grindstone." He meant that Bertram was kept fully occupied.

When the youth was disposed to brag of his supposed accomplishments, Tommy invariably weighed in with a "Thou shouldn't say much about what thou canst do, old lad; thou'st got here anyhow, for all thy cleverness, and thou doesn't seem able to learn very fast. Give over talking, and hold that bar, so as I can show thee how to straighten it. A kid of fourteen would know in about three days. Thou'lt learn in about three years, happen—thou'rt *that* sharp."

Tommy was no Quaker, in spite of his manner of speech. He was an excellent non-commissioned Territorial officer, and he quickly had Bertram enrolled in his company, to that youth's inestimable gain. He made a friend of him, welcoming him at his comfortable home. When work and drill were done, he often took him on long country walks, which the dry humour of his conversation made very enjoyable.

He told a yarn of an early morning walk his father and a friend had once taken as was their custom, that the inhaling of pure air from the moorland might the better fit their lungs to combat the dust-laden atmosphere of the workshop. It was their habit to call for a pint of beer apiece at an inn that marked the turning-point in their twelve-mile stroll. They mostly reached the place about

six o'clock in the morning. Sometimes they had to wait until the doors of the inn were open; they were then forced to consume their refreshment somewhat hurriedly to expedite their return. Perhaps that is how it came about that, instead of paying cash for their beverages, an account was chalked over the mantel-shelf. I do not know what caused procrastination in the matter of payment, suggested in Tommy's story of a call when a fresh maid-servant was found, who had the doors wide open at six o'clock, a cheerful fire burning in the tap-room, and who served the two customers with the pints of ale they ordered, smiling pleasantly.

They quaffed their ale and watched the girl's lively movements with admiration as she put the finishing touches to her work of cleaning the apartment in which they sat. At length Tommy's father remarked, in tones of warm approval—

"Thou *does* seem a clean, tidy wench. I never saw a lass as could beat thee at knocking a bit of work about."

"Aye," his friend added, "she's a bit different from that other tassel they had here."

The girl looked up from her work. "Wasn't she very clean?" she enquired.

"Clean," echoed Tommy's father—"she was ought but that. Why, look at this chimney-piece! Them chalk-marks have been up there nearly two months, and that mucky wench never touched 'em! We've sat here and looked at 'em till we've got fairly sick, wondering why ever they weren't cleaned off."

"Well, I've thought many a time, if they stayed there much longer, we should have to be finding another place to call at; nobody can stand that sort of thing for ever," his friend remarked quietly in support.

The girl flew for the steps. In a minute she

had cleared away the offensive chalk-marks amid praises of her industry and cleanly habits.

Fortunately the landlord appeared at that moment, and displayed an irritatingly accurate memory, combined with jovial good humour.

"You've cleared the slate, I see," he said to them, and turned to ask the girl for the twelve shillings which he well knew had not been paid in settlement.

There was nothing for it but that the customers should pay up, which was something they had no notion of doing when they entered the inn. But the landlord had not done yet.

"This lass," he said, "suits us all. She's cleaned them mucky marks away and pleased you, and she's made you pay your score and pleased me. I'll be a shilling towards a bit of a present for her, and you be sixpence apiece. Bring her a nice comb and a pair of scissors to-morrow morning, and I'll pay you my bob if they're what they should be—not till then, for you'll both bear watching."

The girl got her presents, and the incident terminated happily for all parties.

Told in Tommy's peculiar way, such stories were keenly enjoyed by all who heard them, and have been often related in the trenches, where Tommy is now serving. Bertram caught something of his mentor's humour, and developed a style of conversation infinitely more agreeable than the priggish mannerism he had affected. But Tommy taught him much more. He taught him the use of intricate gauges for measuring steel, and in many other ways fitted him for a better position than he occupied. And the upshot was that Bertram was given a rough clerkship in the department, where the combination of his early training with the knowledge he had recently gained qualified him to render excellent service,

The firm gladly granted both Volunteers a fortnight's leave of absence from duty, that they might serve their period of annual training last July. The fortnight has already lengthened into twelve months, and Tommy's wife and Bertram's parents continue to receive from the generous firm half the wages husband or son would have earned had they been engaged in their usual duties.

Bertram is one of my most lucid correspondents. Here is his account of life in the Flanders trenches:—

“You think it is all misery here, and you pity us a good deal. You need not worry too much. About a day after you have read the newspapers we get the same papers here, and read just what you have read, and nearly as comfortably. We spend our time eating, drinking, smoking, reading, and thinking—especially thinking, as men keep falling, and as we never know when our own turn will come. Most of us get a good many letters, and smile a bit as we think of your wrong ideas about us at home. For, although we have a good deal to put up with, we are a long way from being martyrs. We have plenty to eat, but we are sometimes short of drink, for we may not take any water now that the weather is hot, and there are reasons against drinking it besides the chance that the Huns have poisoned it. When we get to the rear for a rest, we get wine like vinegar and ale like onion-water. In the trenches we have our supplies of coffee and tea as regularly as our ammunition. No praise is too high for the way we are looked after, but it is nice to receive presents. They fill gaps, and we like to feel we're being remembered, and how pleased everybody will be when we get back home. . . .

"We were in a slight engagement four days ago. Our artillery banged at it for an hour. The officers waited to see what damage had been done, then gave the order, 'Now then, go on; get at 'em.'

"The Germans were four hundred yards in front of our trench. It was pitch dark. Our advance-guard was lying half-way between us and the Huns, and we were to support it. We moved forward. Nothing could be seen in the darkness till a German star-shell gave us light enough to see our advance-guard signalling that the enemy was counter-attacking. We hid, every man under his pack like a tortoise. Shells came like water from the rose of a watering-can. A man on my right was blown to pieces, the one next to him was struck by a piece of shrapnel and fell down, a second-lieutenant ran towards him, and himself fell; the whole scene being now lighted up by a blazing farm near by.

"Our artillery crashed out again. The German guns were silenced. We advanced again, and met with little resistance. We reached a little village and were surprised, after the ruins we were used to seeing, to find so many houses standing intact. We searched the houses, and took fifty-five German prisoners from the cellars. As we were sending these to the rear some of their comrades rushed up, and the fight was resumed in the street. Not one of this lot escaped. It was here that I got my leg hurt a bit; so I am at the base, and Tommy is in the next bed with a bad arm, but with life enough in him to make us split our sides laughing at his tales."

The wounded leg he so airily dismissed proved to be so shattered as to render amputation necessary. It is not known even now whether he will recover

from the shock his system has suffered. Meanwhile he is tended, as he and all like him deserve, in a hospital at home, and Tommy is back in the trenches cheering his comrades after his customary fashion.

Writing of Tommy, another friend in the trenches says:—

“We were lost without him when he was in hospital; it seemed so dull and miserable altogether. You see he was always saying something rum, and saying it as solemn as a judge. We are right thankful to have him back, and he’s the same old potato yet. To-day we’re resting a bit, and he’s grumbling like a bear with a sore head. He says, ‘It’s just my luck; while I’ve been away you’ve had gas, and gas shells, and a score yards of trench blown up, and two blooming spies, and all sorts of lively doings. I come back, and there’s nought doing at all. I’ve got my grub regular, and we’ve toffs for officers, and there’s not a blooming thing to write home and complain about anyhow.’”

This writer was brought to me by a member of that much-misunderstood fraternity, the relieving officers under our Poor Law, in my judgment as excellent a body of men, taken collectively, as are to be found comprising any profession or calling in the kingdom. My invariable experience has proved them to be most efficient and painstaking public servants; they show remarkable interest and sympathy towards any deserving applicant for relief; they have long memories for any laudable trait in the character of such as seek their aid, and they are quick to forget bad points where reformation is attempted. The faults of a system—fewer than many think—are frequently and unjustly

laid at the door of men who deserve far more praise than they usually receive.

Years ago, I cannot say how many, this particular relieving officer had occasion to take proceedings against an individual who had absconded from the city leaving his wife and family chargeable to the Guardians of the Poor. When the case had been fully proved, and the man was asked whether he had anything to say for himself, he replied with an air of great confidence tinged with scorn—

“I should think I have. I’ve a good deal to say.”

Being told to say on, he asked the magistrate—

“What do you think of a wife like mine? I’d six miles to go by train to get to my work in a morning, and six miles to come back at night; and I’d to work rare and hard. And just because I stayed to get a pint or two o’ beer after I’d done my work my wife used to go mad, and same if I were badly (ill) and had to stay away a day or two.

“When I got home one night and said to her, I want three buttons on my trousers, lass, she ups and she says, ‘Then thou’d better take ’em to thy landlady where thou spends thy money, and let her stitch ’em on.’ That wor a nice thing to say to a man! What would you do if you’d a wife like that; would you stop wi’ her?”

There was a ring of conscious triumph in his voice. It was evident that he felt he had offered an unanswerable defence.

“Have you anybody to speak for you?” the magistrate asked, unmoved.

“Anybody else?” the defendant enquired in deep disgust. “Ah, plenty! Plenty o’ folks would come and speak for me if I asked ’em. But I can’t see as I need anybody else. I think I’ve said enough.”

“I don’t think you’d get anybody to speak better for you,” the magistrate observed caustically. “Is there anything more you wish to say?”

The defendant seemed grieved at the Court's unreasonableness. "Only that I've worked and done my best," he declared. "I've worked hard. I put up wi' my wife's tantalising ways till I couldn't stand 'em any longer. I'm willing to try her again, if she'll behave herself. What more can a man do?"

Since he asked the opinion of the Court, he had no ground for complaint when he received from an unusually patient and courteous magistrate the stinging reproof—

"Do? I'll tell you what I think you might do. You might attend to your work properly, look after your family, take less to drink, and generally act like a man instead of the idle, drunken vagabond you evidently are: three months."

A crowded Court-room showed marked if silent approval of a just sentence in a flagrant case, but the defendant seemed dazed and bewildered, only getting out a few words of vigorous protest as he stepped from the dock, grumbling—

"Three months! There's neither sense nor reason in it."

It was the eldest son of this individual whom the relieving officer was concerned about when the lad was nineteen years old. The father had done no good in the years succeeding his imprisonment, and was then in the workhouse. The officer was afraid that the lad, Owen, was inclined to follow the path of idleness which had been his father's curse, and desiring to save him if possible, brought him to me if haply I knew of a master who would be inclined to try a youth in his twenty-first situation in two years.

Such masters are not easy to find. Respect for the officer, and desire to save the lad, caused me to do the best I could. He started working in a colliery with a man who was an earnest Christian lay helper and a strict disciplinarian to boot. This

man kept Owen straight in the matter of work for the four years intervening until the war. He was singularly unsuccessful, however, in a spirited attempt he made to get him to occupy his spare time in Church work. Owen would attend a place of worship once a Sunday, but declined to do more. In lodgings where his one complaint was that his landlady seemed to regard him as too much in the house, after being a couple of months in this situation he drifted into the society of youths with whom he had once shared the hospitality of the Guardians. These particular lads looked like enjoying such hospitality again, but in less favourable quarters than the Children's Homes. Loafing at street corners is not compatible with long continuance in regular employment. The relieving officer made Owen an offer of a watch if he would accept my suggestion that he should join the Territorials, and if he remained a member for a year. The officer understood Owen. To get the watch he forsook the corner-boys, joined the volunteers, retained employment, became a better man from discipline and drill, won promotion, and was found ready to take a manly part when the necessity came for stern work in the field, besides winning the offered reward.

Owen's example proves the fallacy of the argument that idleness is inbred. It runs in families undoubtedly, but rather from example than breeding. Moreover, many strenuous workers are burdened with very idle sons. One such sought my advice in his trouble four years ago.

"I've come to see you," he said, "about my cannibal son; I can't make out what to do with him."

"Your cannibal son?" I asked; "who do you mean?"

"I mean our Clem," he replied; "he is a cannibal; he's lived on me off and on all his life. He's strong and hearty—twenty years old—and not been working this three weeks now, nor making any sort of put to find any."

"Turn him out," I suggested. "There's work enough to be found. If he won't do it, let him starve. Tell him to come to me to-morrow morning—nothing more—just say I want to see him. If he comes home at night not having been at work, shut the door in his face."

"Right you are, sir," said my visitor; "I'll do as you say. I'm glad you've told me to shut the door on him. I've wanted to do it before, but the missus wouldn't agree to it. She will now you say so."

I knew Clem. He had been in trouble two months earlier with other idlers, having done considerable damage to a wall out of pure wicked, wanton mischief. I had tried to get him to break with his set of companions and spend his energies in honest work. His father's visit proved that my first attempt had failed.

He did not come to me, though he got my message. Neither did he find work on his own account. His father was at home when he turned up for supper and bed. The door was unceremoniously shut in his face. He walked about all night, being unused to roughing it and sleeping anywhere. Next morning he tried to cajole his mother into taking him into the house after his father had gone to work. Fortunately she realised that she had already done too much in the way of shielding him, and, however unwillingly, encouraging him in idle habits, and wisely told him to expect no further help from her until he regained employment.

Footsore from tramping about all night, hungry and wretched, he slouched up to me three hours later.

"You should have come yesterday, Clem," I said; "I wanted you then, not to-day. What kept you away—a bone in your arm?"

He hung his head very sheepishly. He had nothing to say. I read him a homily on the vice of idleness and the heinous crime of cannibalism, and then offered him the hardest work under the most rigid employer he had ever known.

But for the fact that he had found his parents determined to stand no more nonsense, I do not think he would have stayed at that place a day. If before work was pressed upon him he had become used to managing without a proper bed at night, the result would probably have been the same. As things were he was in that very situation when the time came for his fourth period of annual training with the Territorials to which he had become attached. The training, which began in July 1914, developed into active service in France about March 1915. He was engaged in several hot encounters with the enemy, and was unfortunate enough to be taken prisoner at last, though not before he had given an uncommonly good account of himself.

The first stage of Clem's cure was wrought by his parents, as was fitting, since the father by indifference and the mother by misapplied leniency had allowed the disease to take root and grow in him. The second stage was the result of patient and persistent administering of regular doses of the finest known medicine for idleness—hard, useful work—by one who is a master of his craft. The third stage, of great importance, since it kept the patient in proper physical condition to bear up under treatment, was getting into touch with the Territorial force. The fee of the specialist who prescribed this combination was amply discharged by the transformation of a slouch into a man of whom he was proud, even before the day arrived

when Clem was to prove his manhood in the searching test of war.

Clem was bitterly disappointed when the Germans took him. I am afraid many stirring epistles he wrote to his friends were destroyed by his captors, because they were judged to be somewhat rude. Only one post-card has so far come through, but that hints at previous efforts to communicate a sore need for bread and boots, and, indeed, anything useful to eat or wear.

Calling recently at his home, I found his parents busily employed in making up a substantial parcel, and I could not refrain from playfully commiserating the father on the fact that in spite of an improvement in all other directions his son's character still showed lingering traces of that cannibalism which had marred his earlier years.

"Ah," his father said, "he's living on me again, right enough. But he's welcome to do it now. It seems we're all living one on another, and one for another, these days. When I'm stripped bare-backed, and sweating like a steam-engine, forging big guns, and our boss comes and asks if I can't get on a bit faster and make a bit more overtime into the bargain, though I feel about ready to drop oftentimes, I say, Ah, I must try, 'cos I know the lads want 'em on sea and at the front. And I feel a bit conceited as I drag my feet home as heavy as lumps of lead. Then I get my 'Star' (evening newspaper) and see what our lads are doing for us, and I feel I have done nought. And after that, a post-card comes from our Clem and tells us as he's wanting even a bit of bread, besides having next to no clothes and no boots. He'd many faults one time, but he was never a grumbler. I know he's catching it before he lets us have any idea what he has to put up with. He's turned out a rare good sort, and wiped out whatever he'd put on that slate once. He's my own, and I know

there are plenty as good; but there isn't a better one nowhere."

It was true—true of Clem, and true of every soldier known to me who once showed glaring faults. All wiped out old scores before they went to prove their real sterling merit in the sight of the whole world.

There was Norman, to give another example. He fell into idle ways from being employed by a young chartered accountant who had much personal vanity and loved display, but had no business worth mentioning to transact in the unnecessarily expensive suite of offices his fond parents foolishly provided him with. The war came and made a man of the accountant, whom five years with nothing to do had placed in danger of degeneration. The youth who had helped him to do nothing for the first two of those five years had left that danger behind long before. He had been straightened and strengthened out of recognition as his former self by proper employment and beneficent discipline since his connection with the futile business of auditing accounts where none existed for audit.

The severance came about from Norman growing fond of spending much of what should have been working-time in playing billiards with a set of friends who were also supposed to be better employed. Billiards under such conditions frequently involves gambling. Norman found it so, and lost money. His parents lived miles away, and he was in lodgings. He purloined a ring, the property of his landlady, and pawned it to provide means for settling his gambling debts. Fortunately the theft was at once discovered. He was arrested, tried, and bound over under my supervision.

It was a sad business altogether. The father, an

aged retired schoolmaster in delicate health, and the mother, a woman who had known heavy sorrow, had denied themselves much under the impression that they were giving their son an excellent chance of gaining a good position in life. He had never any such chance in that situation, thanks to the vanity and dishonesty, no less real because unintentional, of an employer who, by giving the parents a false impression of his powers, induced them to make up their son's trifling salary into a sufficient sum to provide him with reasonable necessities until he should become self-supporting. And here was the end of it all.

Very much misery is wrought in the world by just such causes. Apprentices are half-taught their trades, alike in workshop, laboratory, and office. When they complete their terms of apprenticeship they are found utterly unfit for the callings their parents have sacrificed much to qualify them for. Similarly, the problem of the lazy and inefficient maid-servant will be with us so long as the mistress remains unable or unwilling to teach what is justly required of such as undertake responsibility for training young persons in their work.

Norman had far better have spent those two wasted years in open idleness. He had been taught nothing useful and done nothing worth doing as it was, while imagining that he was really in the way of becoming able to earn his living. Had his time been spent purely in play he would not have laboured under that delusion at any rate. And perhaps he would have regarded as natural the ding-dong monotony of the real office work I was able to get for him in exchange for the lounging pastime he had mistaken so long for duty had he started that when the long play-time was over. The misspent period caused him to find his new duties nearly intolerable. He had

headaches innumerable, he suffered from writer's cramp, he was "put on" by his fellow-clerks, he feared his eyes were becoming strained by incessant application—when all the time he was merely doing the ordinary work of an ordinary junior clerk in an ordinary office, and had no real cause for complaint of any sort whatever.

Fortunately his parents had taken his measure. They ignored his piteous appeals for a change, and backed up my determination to keep him in his new employment. He had the virtue of not caring to be beaten; that made him do his work properly. He could not bear that another clerk of his own age should show superior diligence and ability.

Here also was the string to harp on in seeking to employ his spare time. A youth in that same office was a crack shot. Norman disclosed to me, quite unwittingly, a certain envy of the youth's prowess with a rifle, while boasting of his own ability to beat him with a billiard-cue.

I reminded him that for the present, by a promise made to his father, his mother, and myself, billiards were forbidden. Why not become a crack shot himself and beat the youth at his own game? Norman jumped at the bait, becoming so intensely eager to join the Territorials that I had to bestir myself a little inconveniently to facilitate his early admission to membership.

It is remarkable how quickly headaches, eye-strain, writer's cramp, martyrdom—all the indications of rebellion against the yoke of duty which he showed—disappeared as he became engrossed in his new pursuit. That the young man he envied had the advantage of two years' start over him in the practice of rifle-shooting was all to the good. Norman proved to have in him the making of a better shot. It was well that nearly three years' steady training must be undergone before he was able to prove his superiority. An

easy triumph would have been harmful to a youth of his character. He became a reliable and painstaking servant of a great company able and eager to show appreciation of good service, and was rewarded accordingly. His parents, relieved of the necessity of contributing to his support, and, what was much more important in their view, of all anxiety as to his welfare, enjoyed a pride in their son which has since been enhanced by a letter they have had from the commanding officer of his battalion, telling of Norman's bravery in the firing line, where his skill as a rifle-shot has been a distinct gain to his comrades.

One further breeding-ground for idle habits—perhaps the most productive of all—is found in the conditions of child life in towns. There are great advantages in the comforts of modern civilisation. There are great corresponding disadvantages. It is highly convenient to obtain a copious supply of excellent water by merely turning a tap, and the drudgery children of bygone generations endured in laboriously carrying the household supplies from some distant draw-well, pump, or spring, can scarcely be conceived by our own young folk. Ability to board a car, ride a return journey of four miles, and bring back what is required, turns the running of errands into play. The lonely messenger tramping that distance a generation ago had a far more tedious and toilsome experience. A town-bred lad seldom feels the burden of responsibility for gathering sticks and chopping them into convenient pieces for domestic fires. He knows little of the discipline of weeding a garden while more fortunate companions, having discharged their tasks, are free to play after school, or of the terrors of field-work in a hot sun, day by day, at holiday-

time. Few old-time schoolboys' duties remain; while those which used to be thought most fitting for girls have multiplied with the increase of furniture and ornaments in modern cottages, and the greater prevalence of dust and dirt in the atmosphere. Girls naturally fail to see why they should not share in that freedom from homely cares enjoyed by their brothers. It often comes about that mothers are left to do all the work of the home themselves. This is unfortunate for both parents and children.

Robbed of the elementary preparation incidental to bygone years, modern children are less receptive to instruction in the useful domestic sciences. Their training becomes more difficult. The temptation of a busy housewife to dispense with their services grows. Useless and unemployed in a home where much work must be done, the attraction there decreases for our young folk. Parental control weakens with the withdrawal of parental supervision and instruction. We have reached a stage where the rule is far too widespread for a working mother to accept all domestic duties as her inevitable lot, and for her child to claim exemption from sharing by a feather's weight a burden which, divided, could be borne easily and pleasantly. I will not picture the stage to which we are drifting. But I have no desire to see any amplification of instances I wot of where a tyrant child rules over an abjectly slavish and obedient mother, and where bitter shame is the only possible emotion as intelligence contemplates the humiliating spectacle.

As a general rule I would hold that no mother should herself do anything her boy or girl is capable of doing. She should never fetch coal from the cellar, clean boots, knives, forks, or spoons, or wash dishes, under ordinary circumstances, when she has a healthy, capable boy or

girl available. There is no plainer proof of the yearning of young people to be employed than the misery endured by the child who comes to you and plaintively laments that he "has nothing to do." To give suitable occupation to every young person is to render that person your debtor. The common excuse that the children of to-day have too much to do in the way of school-work to make it reasonable or desirable to employ them at home, I entirely repudiate. If it is true, so much the worse for our system of education. It cannot be right that the average child shall grow up ignorant of what he will always find useful, so that he may learn things that ten to one he will never have the slightest occasion to use. It must be wrong to give a child the utterly false idea that anything undignified or unimportant exists in doing the commonplace tasks which must always be discharged if the wheels of life are to run smoothly. These should, to my mind, come a long way first. I am perfectly certain that not one child in ten thousand trained from early years to take an interested and intelligent part in home duties is ever found among the juvenile delinquents in any Police Court in the land. Children brought up on the old lines are too well supervised to get into serious mischief.

I am betrayed into this homily by remembering the home life of one Ted, who writes to me to-day from the north of France. When I went to see him at his home with a view to preventing his further appearance before the Court on a charge of illegally receiving bets, I found that he was the only son of a very delicate mother. He was twenty-five, and he had four sisters ranging from sixteen to twenty-two years old. The father was dead. It was a well-kept home of fair size, containing a good

deal of furniture. From morning to night the mother was never at rest. Yet none of her children gave the slightest help in the house, or thought there was anything strange in seeing her always at work. The girls were shop-assistants, their brother was properly a mechanic, but had temporarily relinquished his trade to take up book-making.

For two hours before the girls went to work, and for two hours after their return home, day by day, the whole of every half-holiday, and every Sunday, they saw their mother toiling on. They took it quite for granted that she should make their beds, cook their meals, clean their boots, wash their clothing, do their mending, while they sat reading, or strolled abroad seeking to relieve the boredom of existence. Detesting housework, they had never so much as attempted any branch of it. They could not even darn a stocking, and were so hopeless as to boast of their ignorance. They attended church fairly regularly, and were considered as above the average girl of their station. Yet they saw no humiliation in their mother, ill and worn, being allowed to do what they should have relieved her of. Sweethearts came along all too soon, and were received into a comfortable home such as they erroneously supposed each of the daughters of the house to be capable of keeping. All the four girls are now married to working men of limited means, and every marriage is a sad failure.

Like his sisters, Ted was once content to let his mother do everything for him. He had drifted into book-making purely from learning to love an idle life, and his love for an idle life came of never growing sufficiently interested in anything better.

"Why aren't my boots blacked?" I heard him

enquire petulantly as I reached his mother's door on my first visit.

The mother plaintively replied that she had been too busy with other work to think of the boots, but promised to remedy his grievance at once.

As nothing makes me more angry than that sort of thing, Ted had the pleasure of seeing me much out of temper. I know that to lose one's temper is weak and foolish. There is sometimes this compensation: the person who causes one to lose it is impressed by the conviction that one means business.

Ted resumed respectable employment. When I made another call a fortnight later, I found him in the yard engaged in blacking the boots of the whole family. He had previously hauled up from the cellar enough coal to feed the household fires until he returned from work on the following day, and when he had finished cleaning the boots he actually tackled the job of feeding the domestic cat!

His resuming work I put down to the credit of a warning given by the Bench that a term of imprisonment instead of a fine would reward his next appearance before the Court on a charge of illegal betting. I take credit myself for his beginning to clean boots, haul up coal, and feed the cat. That Ted became a member of the Territorial force was due to a joint recommendation on the part of his master and myself.

The master, himself an old volunteer officer, predicted that in following this advice Ted would become as smart and industrious a workman as any he employed. He was right. For four years preceding the war Ted was all that could be wished, both as an employee and as a son. Indeed, his consideration for his mother put his sisters to shame, since he cheerfully did

much to help her in the house that could more naturally and easily have been done by them.

Looking round and seeing things as they are, I cannot but hope that one result of the war will be the recognition of a necessity for reviving the old English pride of home and the old dignity of housewifery. The men who have gone forth to risk all for home deserve nothing less than that the best home can offer shall await their return, and be handed on to generations unborn. The one way of assuring that is to persuade the mothers and daughters of our race of its importance. If that be done, much blessing on every hand must perforce follow, and not the least, the drying up of one perennial spring of idle habits.

Feeding the domestic cat in his mother's home would appear to indicate a latent love of animal life which burst out under circumstances described in this letter from Ted:—

“I have quite a menagerie out here. I have a dog, a starved mongrel about the size of a rat, frightened to death at the sound of the guns. I found the beggar in a cellar whining for all he was worth, and he bit my finger when I rescued him. A cat which has made her home with our fellows, and which looks to me for her food, is washing herself among bursting shells in the sunlight, and seems to quite enjoy the fun. Another cat, husband of the above, cares for nothing but sleeping all day on a sack we have put for him in the trench. He goes out foraging at night; mostly his wife accompanies him, but they turn up again at daylight. I had a cow for a bit; but she got too venturesome—she didn't mind shells at all—and she was knocked out at last. A Great Dane bitch

pays us a visit most days from a ruined farm in the rear; she does not seem afraid of the guns, but most of the other dogs are. We like to have them about us, they make the days less monotonous. I got into a row one day with our C.O. for fetching in a dog that had been legged by a bullet, and nearly getting shot over the job myself.

“We keep hard at work, entrenching and repairing, and fighting a bit as we get the chance. We are all anxious to get to Berlin. The day will come for us—the day that the Germans thought would be theirs. How many of us will live to see it nobody knows. But we are all in good heart. We shall every one of us do our best.”

IX.

WITH THE ROYAL NAVAL DIVISION.

I DO not know that I greatly mind who was responsible for the ill-starred expedition to Antwerp. Common humanity dictates the supplying of food and clothing to friends who are prisoners of war in Germany as a result of what some call a mad enterprise. I am sure I do not grudge the few comforts I am able to send now and then. Moreover, I do not set myself up as a military expert. The fact that somebody tried hard to do something useful in itself goes far towards disarming any criticism I might be inclined to offer. If the forlorn hope had been achieved, no doubt at all my cap would have gone up in the air in great jubilation.

But I do feel sore at paying eightpence for a biscuit-tin when ugly rumour says the said biscuit-tin will be of service to the enemy after a starving friend has emptied it of its contents. The enemy would go for ever without biscuit-tins if he depended upon me for supplies provided intentionally for his aid and comfort. If I can only help those who, to their unspeakable chagrin, are in his none too merciful keeping, I am afraid I must risk the other matter. It vexes me all the same. And I cannot bear to think of the calamity which brought the eager

service of so many British lads to so untimely and so unsatisfactory a close.

There is something very painful in contrasting the hopeful, high-spirited, stimulating letters I get from battleship or mine-sweeping trawler, and from the front or the home training camp, with the melancholy post-cards which reach me from some wretched German prisoner quarters. Here is a sample of the latter :—

“The bread did taste good. And the biscuits, they were lovely. We shall be glad when the next box gets here. I’m wanting boots very bad. My trousers is that ragged I’m ashamed to walk about. From one of your old boys,—ALECK.”

It requires the exercise of a powerful imagination to picture Aleck writing that. He was always the soul of independence until he got into German hands. Nor was he any stranger to privations. Knowing what I do of him, I need no more than his pathetic series of post-cards to convince me that the enemy treatment of British prisoners is very bad indeed. No small matter would disturb Aleck. He would bear much without uttering the semblance of a complaint.

He was first introduced to me by a police officer ten years ago. Since I have found many people to fail to realise that the police are among the best friends of the neglected and homeless, I gladly give the following particulars of what an officer did in Aleck’s case, and all the more as I am sure that under similar conditions almost any other officer would have done the same.

Aleck, being fourteen years old, returned from work one Monday night to find an empty home. The few bits of furniture had been cleared out, and his father and his stepmother were gone

away, nobody knew where. On the previous Saturday the lad had handed over his week's wages. He was left to obtain food and shelter until next pay-day as best he could.

The officer on that beat had seen the parents taking their goods away early in the afternoon. He did not, of course, know they were abandoning Aleck. When he saw the boy walking about the street in a puzzled sort of fashion, that idea crossed his mind for the first time, and he enquired whether Aleck knew where they were gone. Finding that the lad knew nothing about the matter, he explained what he had seen, telling the boy to make himself as comfortable as he could for the night in the empty house, and giving him money to buy food.

The good fellow took the trouble to visit me before going on duty next day. "They're no good to the lad," he said, describing what like the parents were, and what they had done; "there are some swine about, but this pair would take a bit of beating. I've been talking to my missus, and we think we'd like to give this poor lad a chance. You see, we've no children, and he seems a nice lad. So I've told him to come to our house when he's done his work to-day."

It was a decision which did credit to their hearts; but I felt that the officer had hardly come to give me that information alone. He told me presently that my help was wanted in the matter of getting the boy into more suitable employment, the occupation he was following being of the blind-alley type.

By the expenditure of less than a hundredth part of the anxiety and trouble the officer and his wife so cheerfully undertook, I was able to do the part required of me, and all went well with Aleck in his new home for two years. The officer's wife then became seriously ill, and Aleck had a chance

of exhibiting his gratitude, which he took full advantage of.

"He's just like a lass in the house," the officer told me. "Before he goes to work when I'm on night duty he's up in the morning by five o'clock and lights the fire; then he makes my wife a cup of tea, and has breakfast ready for me, and the house all cleaned up, before he goes to his work at seven o'clock. He comes straight home when he's finished work, and makes bread, washes all the pots up, cleans what wants cleaning, and gets his own food ready for next day. My wife says he couldn't be handier, or a greater comfort to her, if he were a girl."

The constable did not say that Aleck was unable to discharge one of the manifold household duties in which he was now so competent until taught by the good woman who reaped the benefit of carefully instructing a willing pupil. The lad went on with his helpful domestic labours for six months longer; then, to his great grief, the officer's wife died—an event that was followed by the breaking-up of the home, and the policeman's retirement from the force on a well-earned pension.

Before returning to the hamlet from whence he came to serve in the constabulary of a great city, he saw Aleck settled in lodgings with the widow of an old colleague. Unfortunately this arrangement did not work out as satisfactorily as had been hoped for. The widow was a careless, wasteful, pleasure-loving person. Aleck saw the tide setting much in the direction taken by his stepmother, and after eight months made up his mind to go to sea.

Although I had known for some time that he had ceased to attend a church to which he had been introduced, it was not till I completed arrangements for him to go aboard a schooner

that I found out the reason. He was fond of appearing well-dressed; he had a good stock of clothing; but his landlady had pawned everything he possessed except his working suit. Moreover, she had borrowed from him every penny of the ten pounds he had saved. That was why he was driven to allow me to provide his sea-kit and the expenses necessary to enable him to join his ship.

The widow kept in touch with him, and, I am afraid, wrote begging letters to him which extracted all his spare cash. At any rate he was never able to spare the cost of a holiday visit here till he had been absent four years. The widow had been married again twelve months by that time, and being of an inquisitive turn of mind, I discovered that for slightly over that period she had ceased to trouble Aleck with her tales of woe. As though to prove that he was never to be free from bearing the burdens of others, this solitary visit must needs bring him into contact with the stepmother whom he had not seen since she deserted him nearly seven years before.

Aleck seems constitutionally unable to resist a pitiful appeal. He must needs offer to support his stepmother when she told him that, owing to his father's illness in the workhouse, she was about to herself go thither. Before I had time to advise him by all means to let her go, he had arranged to maintain her by giving up a sea-faring life and taking labouring work in the city.

He suffered for his well-meant folly. He ought to have foreseen what would be the end. Doing all he could to provide for the upkeep of a decent cottage home, and finding his efforts rewarded by drunken complaints about the smallness of his earnings making it impossible to have things nice, he took to careless ways himself, and eventually came into the Court on a charge of drunkenness.

Then I woke him up. He secured respectable lodgings. His stepmother entered the workhouse, to share with her husband a shelter much beyond their deserts in the matter of accommodation and comfort. Aleck was once more on the highroad to prosperity, having rehabilitated himself two years, when he noticed a poster calling for recruits for the Naval Reserve.

He came to make a pretence of consulting me, but his mind was already made up, and he was in naval uniform in a few days. The Antwerp expedition put an early period to his military activities, and he is wearily waiting for the war to end, indulging in the only complaining I have ever known him do. He is heartily welcome to any trifles I can send towards the alleviation of his miseries. Surely the day of his release draws near.

Keith, a companion of Aleck in captivity, possibly fearful lest the somewhat outspoken postcard, already quoted, should be suppressed, writes:—

“We’re not doing so bad as all that comes to. But we should like a bit of English bread again; and the plum cake was fine. We all enjoyed it ever so much; and didn’t we smack our lips over them minch pies.”

Keith came to me first because he smacked his lips over penny custards. Most of us have been guilty of a similar weakness. Where Keith went wrong was in stealing the custards he smacked his lips over. He was ordered to receive four strokes with the birch rod.¹ After pleasure, pain: that is the law in other places than a Police Court. But when poor Keith’s hinder part had been bared

¹ The Court being under the impression that he was not yet fourteen.

for the rod, it was discovered to be, in the expressive phraseology of the constable whose business it was to administer corporal punishment, "no bigger than a rabbit's," and the strokes were mercifully laid on, though Keith was fifteen years old.

When all is said and done, perhaps few of us can afford to be too censorious of Keith's conduct. He was a stray lad whom nobody wanted. He had been brought up by an old woman whose only interest in him was the half-crown a week paid fairly regularly by his mother for his maintenance, his father being unknown. When this contribution ceased after ten years, all efforts to trace the mother failed.

The old woman was advised to hand the lad over to the custody of the Guardians. But he was by that time earning substantial sums in selling newspapers after school hours. His food was docked in an attempt to make up for the financial loss, until at fourteen he began to devote his whole time to street-trading. Things went better with Keith then until the old woman had a fall which necessitated her admission to hospital, where she remains after five years. The home being given up, Keith found shelter in a lodging-house, maintaining himself still by newspaper selling.

He was not conspicuously successful in that line. For one thing, he lacked imagination. He was no sort of a hand at inventing cries. He went slavishly by the contents bill in calling out what the paper contained. For another thing, he was too reticent. While he was still a little chap, customers would push aside more forward youths who tried to forestall him in serving them, and he got his chance in that way. By-and-by customers began to mistake reticence for indifference, and ceased to trouble about him. From lack of proper nourishment his whole body came

to match the part so quaintly described by the constable. At last Keith conceived it to be necessary to steal penny custards so as to maintain even the dimensions of a rabbit.

"Now it will be a real charity if you can do aught for this lad, sir," the officer who arrested Keith told me; "he's as thin as a rail; when I laid hold on him I could feel every bone in his body,"—thus corroborating the statement of his colleague whose business it was to wield the rod.

A country shopkeeper chanced to want a lad to live in the house and make himself generally useful. Out of doors, his special work consisted in looking after a pony employed for the purpose of delivering goods to distant customers. Keith settled down in the place. His master "took to" him, and declared that "the missus made such a fuss of him" that some lads would have been spoiled. That good woman made warm underclothing and knitted socks for him, saw that he was well fed, and generally mothered him admirably. Her husband, while "doubting whether the boy could stand corn" poured before him in such abundance, inconsistently bestowed a couple of suits and two pairs of good strong boots upon him. Keith "stood corn." After two years he remained in that employment as quiet, willing, painstaking, and reliable a servant as any one could desire.

Then a cousin of his mistress came on a visit, and having been at sea twelve clear, calm days on a trip to Norway, was full of enthusiasm for a sailor's life, declaring that if he were young again, nothing would keep him from adopting that calling. His enthusiasm conveyed itself to Keith. I was surprised a few days later to learn that Keith was at sea.

There is often a sharp contrast between anticipation and realisation. Chiefly because his own

brief experience of the sea was gained under weather conditions exactly opposite to those experienced by his mistress's cousin, Keith was seriously discouraged and disappointed. Fortunately his situation remained open when he returned to land in a month's time, having determined to forswear the sea for ever. He resumed membership of a local company of the Boys' Brigade, and thenceforward dreamed more of military than naval glory, until the call for recruits for Naval Brigades reminded him of his brief maritime training. The offered combination of naval and military duties attracted him irresistibly. He responded after consulting his employers, whose expectation of decreasing business owing to the war combined with more worthy and patriotic reasons for sparing him. They felt able to promise to reinstate him when he should come back, meanwhile doing his work in addition to their own.

How it came about that Keith was selected to take part in the ill-fated expedition to Antwerp I do not at all understand. Certainly he had no pretensions to military efficiency. Perhaps his courage and readiness to go wheresoever duty seemed to call made him appear to possess qualifications and experience not his. It is idle to speculate. The truth will come out when he returns from that wretched prison camp in Germany. Meanwhile all that can be done is to cheerfully join his former employers in sending a well-packed biscuit-tin periodically in the hope of mitigating his hardships somewhat. No, not quite all! There remains the duty of straining every nerve to hasten the day of his release.

Internment in Holland is a fate only less hard for high-spirited lads. That bit of quicksilver named Billy, who writes occasionally from a camp

there, must be enduring tortures from enforced inability to take part in military movements in service of his country.

He came to me at sixteen years old, having helped himself to other people's goods. It was thought that he was led to make this solitary departure from the path of rectitude because of a passionate desire to visit London. When he missed London and reached the local police cells he was taught a sharp lesson in the virtue of honesty. For the first time in his life he spent a night on something harder than a feather bed. It was cold. The rugs supplied for his covering compared ill for warmth and comfort with the blankets he was used to at home. He spent the night wakeful, shivering, and in misery. The quicksilver had sunk below zero by morning. It was a very tear-stained face I saw, with eyes red with crying.

Billy's widowed mother presented a still more sorrowful spectacle. An excellent woman who made the most of every penny, she was left comfortably provided for. She had only Billy. She naturally resisted his appeals to be allowed to go to sea. It seemed much wiser to persuade him to settle down to the small but productive business his father had left, and which she sought to hold together for his benefit. So she steadily kept his nose to the grindstone, on the principle that interest in one occupation would drive out thoughts of another. The flaw in the argument was that Billy's interest in his father's trade was of the slightest, ample room being left in his mind for the consideration of projects of steaming, and sailing, and flying, until he decided to journey to London in the hope of becoming either a sailor or an aviator, he cared little which.

When plans were matured, and the means for carrying them out provided by the illicit process

of selling goods not his to sell, Billy was unable to bid his mother farewell. It came as a great shock to the widow when news reached her that her lad was in the hands of the police. She was forced to leave him in a cell for the night, but she herself found no sleep.

It is generally agreed that the ends of justice are better served by reforming than by punishing the wrong-doer. The first step in Billy's reformation was accomplished when he was arrested; the next step during the night in the cells. His reflections during the twelve saddest hours he will ever spend made an indelible impression, patent even when he appeared in the dock next morning, and growing daily more noticeable for months. By the willing consent of merciful prosecutors, Billy received the benefit of the Probation of Offenders' Act, and the Bench discharged him with a few kind words of advice.

The business he is destined to inherit being of a sort not highly technical, and Billy continuing to hanker after more excitement in life, I suggested to his mother that no harm would be done by allowing him to make a long trip on a sailing-vessel. I have noticed that lads sometime unappreciative of good homes return from such a trip with wonderful gratitude for things they formerly counted as nought. After much trouble the mother came to take my point of view, and Billy departed on a long voyage.

"When you've another youth like Billy," his skipper wrote to me from a distant port, "let somebody else have him. If I live to get home again, it will prove that I can stand more worrying and pestering than I believed mortal man could stand. This Billy of yours is IT. He is the limit. We can make nothing of him, he's that confounded good-tempered. He's never out of one piece of mischief before he's in another. He has to be told fifty times

a day to drop things he's no business to touch, and he fairly staggers one with his apologies, so that one forgets to give him the knock on his fingers which might cure him. Then he must needs ferret his way into everybody's business. I suppose he's seeking information. The way he frames suggests that he will gather the largest and most useless stock a man ever went to sea with, if he goes on. But that is the question. Will he go on? I doubt whether he'll ever make another voyage. He might stand it. But nobody will stand him. If he goes on long he'll go overboard. I can't describe how tiresome everybody finds him. He does nothing wrong to speak of: but then he does nothing right. Not that he isn't willing to learn. He wants to learn too much, and he thinks he knows the alphabet before he knows a B from a bull's foot. So he never gives himself time to really learn anything. He'll never make a sailor. He's amusing, in a way, but there are many times when clowns aren't wanted on a ship. I'll make the best of him for this voyage; but we must both understand. He's the last of his sort I'll take. If you wanted to cure him of a liking for the sea, I think you've managed that all right. But then, I can't take claps on that footing."

This letter left me wondering what particular species of recent mischief had caused the skipper to feel so annoyed with Billy. I am wondering as I write. The matter was never explained satisfactorily. The skipper and Billy were alike tired of one another's company when the voyage was done, yet neither set forth any tangible complaint. Nothing violent or outrageous appears to have been done. I suppose that Billy's mercurial temperament was responsible for numerous unconscious interferences and imperti-

nences which rendered him a nuisance to his associates.

He found the sea to offer few of the pleasures he had imagined, and failed to seek me out to describe his adventures. I discovered his return, indeed, by accidentally calling at the place of business he had forsaken eighteen months earlier, and finding him again at work at his old trade. A very brief interview sufficed to show that Billy's taste for adventure was satisfied for the present. To his mother's delight he settled down into a staid and sober business man. Until the war came to awake the passion for change still latent in his heart, the only sign he gave of martial spirit was shown in an enthusiasm for marksmanship which was fostered and encouraged by membership of a local rifle-club.

He was among the first to volunteer to serve in a Naval Brigade. His ability to shoot straight may have had something to do with his being chosen to serve at Antwerp. Unfortunately he was driven to Holland by stress of circumstances before he had time to "get his eye in," as he says in one of his numerous letters of lamentation over his fate.

A petty officer for whom work has been constantly found in training recruits at H.M.S. *Crystal Palace* since the early days of the war was detained in England by a slight illness, and so prevented from joining the expedition. It might have been better for him had he been interned or made prisoner. Unless the wife he has lately taken to himself improves greatly it certainly would have been better.

It is strange how those who see most of domestic infelicity in their own homes are least careful in selecting suitable partners themselves. When

Jeff's parents had been married five years, and Jeff was two years old, his two sisters being three and four respectively, the father took a strong fancy to the woman, and the mother to the man, living next door. This resulted in an exchange of wives. Jeff's mother took up her abode with her two girls next door, and the neighbour's wife, a childless person, became Jeff's foster-mother, living with his father as wife.

Under these strange conditions the two couples lived side by side quite amicably for three years, the girls well knowing who their father was, and the boy being aware, as soon as he was able to know anything, who was his real mother. At the beginning of the fourth year Jeff's mother removed to another part of the city with the girls, the man with whom she had cast in her lot, and two children she had borne him.

Jeff made periodical visits to his mother's house at school holidays, but, on the whole, appeared to prefer his father's home, where he usually dwelt, until at thirteen years old he left school and obtained his first situation. Then began a series of attempts on his mother's part to go behind the unwritten bargain arrived at when the exchange of husbands and wives was arranged. As a wage-earner, Jeff became valuable in her sight. She did her utmost to encourage him to settle permanently at her house, patiently continuing her efforts for more than twelve months, when she succeeded in inducing him to bring his wages on a certain Saturday as a pledge of his consent to her plans.

After about a fortnight, however, he was upset by something that occurred, and refused to go to work. His situation lost through neglect of duty, he spent his time with a gang of young thieves who idled about the neighbourhood of his mother's house. The affection she had professed for him

now cooled rapidly. After he had been idle a week she drove him from her door.

Returning to his father's house, Jeff found that closed against him. His foster-mother washed her hands of him. He did not find any opportunity for offering an explanation. He was just told to "go back where he had been," and not suffered to cross the threshold. So he joined the gang he had become acquainted with in something worse than idle play. Being caught shopbreaking in their company he was arrested. Asked his address, he was puzzled what to reply. The police would not be satisfied with the "nowhere" which he gave, and which as accurately summed up the truth concerning his residence for the last month as "anywhere" would have done. Since they pressed for a definite place of abode, he at length gave the last he had known for more than two consecutive nights as his mother's house.

But his mother had determined to wash *her* hands of him, being convinced that he would yield her little profit. She desired no sort of responsibility for a lad in the hands of the police. As it chanced she entertained an antipathy for members of the force. She held her tongue when the message telling of his arrest was delivered at her house, but attended the hearing of the charge at the Police Court for the purpose of denying responsibility for the lad's custody should that step appear desirable. As it happened she had her journey for nothing. The set of youths with whom Jeff was found associated in crime being of evil reputation, all were committed for trial at the next Quarter Sessions. Bail was allowed, but the parents were not pressed to keep the lads from awaiting trial in prison. It was held that no harm would be done if they spent the interval there.

It did not seem wise to Jeff's mother at that

moment to acquaint his father with the lad's position. Unpleasant things might be said of her enticing Jeff away. Reflection taught her an easy way of causing her husband to think that she knew nothing of the lad's movements immediately before he joined the shopbreakers. On the Sunday preceding the opening of Quarter Sessions, she made it come in her way to meet her husband, whose attendance at Court next day it seemed necessary to secure.

She began diplomatically by enquiring—

"What's this our Jeff's been up to? Whatever is he in trouble for?"

"He isn't in no trouble as I know on," her husband replied.

"But I know different," she rejoined; "one of our neighbours, a regular downright bad lot herself, has a lad in trouble with him, and there's more of 'em besides them two, and they've got to face Court to-morrow. They told me this morning as our Jeff's been in prison nine week. You've brought him up nice! I wonder you aren't ashamed of yourself—you and that towel you've got living with you; she's not fit to look after a cat, let alone a lad. But you can't expect a barren cow like her to have a mother's feelings. If I'd had him, he'd have been a bit o' use to hisself and other folks as well now. As it is, he's ruined, that's what he is.

"You'd better see about things to-morrow; they'll be making you sit up else, and serve you right." And she contrived to leave her cast-off husband under an uneasy impression that she was injured by the neglect and mistreating of their son in the home he was responsible for.

He was very frightened when I saw him at Court next morning. He evidently expected "a good blowing-up" for not securing Jeff's release on bail. The Recorder chanced to regard the lad's

detention as likely to have a salutary effect upon his future conduct, so the father's fears proved needless. While Jeff's companions, older and further advanced in wrongful paths, were sent for long periods to corrective institutions, he was himself bound over on promising to be of good behaviour for the future, his father becoming surety for him and taking him home.

I started Jeff in a situation, in which he worked well for above a year. I frequently visited his home during the period, and all the while imagined I was dealing with Jeff's mother in the woman I saw there. My mistake was corrected by finding Jeff idling about one day and asking him why he was not at work.

"She didn't get me no dinner ready; she wor in one of her pot-mule moods; so I chucked my job. A chap can't work on air," he told me sulkily.

"And what have you done for your mother to treat you like that?" I enquired.

"She isn't my mother," he retorted, not too deferentially.

"Look here, Jeff," I said, "don't let me have any nonsense. You ought to be at work, and you must be at work. You'll have to go home with me."

I took him to his father's house.

"Let him be with his mother," the person there whom I had hitherto regarded as standing in that relationship to Jeff told me; "she won't let him alone. She's always 'ticing him away. She'd better have him. I'm sick of his cheeky ways. There's nought suits him. Let her have him. His father and me get on right enough when he's out of the road. There's been nought but trouble lately all through him; so he'll be better away."

The father, whom I saw later, was of the same mind, being bitterly resentful of his wife's interference with Jeff. He had learnt that he had been tricked into attending Quarter Sessions, and gave

me a long description of how it all came about. It was evident that Jeff had lost his father's confidence, whether through his mother's fault or from other causes. It would serve no useful purpose to let him return to that home.

I visited the mother's house. Naturally, I did not expect much of her, but I was anxious to see what sort of person she was. I found her to be a good-looking, plausible woman. Her house was just then clean and attractive. Later, I discovered that she had periodical drinking-bouts, when her home got into a pitiable state of dirt and neglect.

Matrimonial tangles are seldom interesting to those who are brought closely into touch with the victims. Natural as the reciprocal contempt and hate of the various parties may be, these go to form but wearying stories for those who must listen seeking to unravel the truth.

There was no attempt to conceal the fact that an exchange of husbands and wives had been arranged about fourteen years earlier, and no allegation of ill-treatment or infidelity was brought against any one as justification for the course pursued. It was taken for granted that, free to choose whether or not they remained with the partners they were joined to in matrimony, they had chosen not to remain; that on the whole they had chosen well; and that the matter was nobody's business except their own. What Jeff's mother was anxious to impress upon me was the unsuitability of the other woman to have charge of her son, and her own ability to make a man of him. That she went into greater detail than was necessary in seeking to prove these points is of no moment now.

She wished me to believe that, having a mother's love for Jeff, she was prepared to make any sacrifice to help in undoing the faults of his early mis-training. She offered him a good home. For my

own part, I could render great assistance by placing the lad again in remunerative employment and giving him strict directions to regularly hand his earnings to his mother.

I had heard that kind of thing before. It would be amusing were it not so tragic to witness the frequency with which similar women exhibit a curious notion that one is taken in with the flimsiest tale. They seem to forget that, with the whole story of their lives lying open before one, it is quite impossible to give credence to tales absolutely contradicting ascertained facts. Their miserable eagerness to handle their children's wages makes them willing to act or to tell any lie which gives promise to effect their end.

It was plainly not desirable that Jeff should any longer share the home of either parent. I offered him the usual choice between farm and ship. He chose a ship, where he did well for four years.

Then his mother, having fallen out with her partner, who left her for awhile, wrote Jeff a letter in which she pretended that she had been offered a situation of great promise, which was being kept open for him until he replied. It was a crafty plot, since she knew that the post she made out as waiting for him was his heart's desire. She had no sort of chance of carrying out her promise. She was obsessed with an idea that Jeff would be useful at home. When he got back he must work at anything he could get to do.

In response to the spurious invitation, he returned on the very day that his mother's partner found his way back. Poor Jeff had deserted his ship and left his kit behind in his anxiety to seize the grand chance held out by his mother, and was greatly annoyed when, after a few days' procrastination, she blurted out the truth, and bade him get work "or else clear out."

He cleared out, took up his dwelling with a sister who had left home to marry, and came to tell me the plight he was in. I wanted him to return to sea, but he declared he was ashamed to go back after deserting his ship. Probably he had boasted of excellent prospects on the strength of his mother's letter, and dreaded being laughed at. Work was found for him here until the declaration of war, very soon after which he accepted service in a Naval Brigade.

It was a good while before I found out that his mother was enjoying seventeen shillings and sixpence a week to compensate for loss she was supposed to have sustained by her son's enlistment. It turned out that Jeff, after joining, called to tell her he was leaving the city on the following day. She clasped him in her arms, wept over him, told him how proud she was of him, gave him her blessing, and insisted that, the future being all unknown, he must spend that night in her home, lest both came near to breaking their hearts in vain regret because they parted other than as mother and boy should part. Jeff was as clay in her hands. He requested the employer whose service he was leaving to pay her the generous allowance he made to dependants of servants who joined the colours, and afterwards saw that the Admiralty pay went in the same direction. To secure so handsome a weekly sum as the seventeen shillings and sixpence these payments amounted to was worth a little acting on her part. To do her justice, she did it uncommonly well.

Unfortunately both for her and for Jeff, somebody else could do a little acting too. In the course of his residence with his married sister, Jeff had got to know one of her friends and former fellow-servants in a warehouse in this city. This girl, not being fond of work, envied her friend's good fortune in securing a husband and an easy life,

and became a frequent visitor to her house in the hope of achieving similar success herself. Perhaps she let Jeff see too much of her. At any rate, her net was spread in vain, until some weeks after his enlistment. Even her amorous letters met with no response until his mother interfered.

It having come to the mother's ears that the girl was seeking to entrap her son, and that consequently her own carefully-laid plans to secure aid and comfort from Jeff's patriotic service were in danger of being brought to nought, she came along to ask me to write to her lad and warn him of his danger. It was a great shame, she declared, that, "for the sake of his bit of money," a lass who would never be any good to him should angle for the poor innocent boy.

Experience has taught many of us the folly of expecting to prevent the marriage of a young couple by opposing it. We look upon that as the one infallible way of securing their union. Knowing at that time nothing for or against the girl, I of course declined to have anything to do with the matter.

Therefore the mother wrote anonymously to her son, warning him that he was being sought after by a girl of abandoned character. She signed the letter "A well-wisher," and flattered herself that he would not know who had sent it.

But he did know; and with that unaccountable faith in his mother which boys like him often possess in spite of everything they suffer, he attached tremendous importance to it, writing at once to his sister to denounce the girl, and to request that she should be told never to communicate with him again.

The sister, being loyal to her friend and at daggers drawn with her mother, resented the false charge of immorality most strongly, writing back to Jeff such a letter as made him heartily

ashamed of giving a moment's credence to the scandal. Being a manly fellow, he sought to compensate for the injury done by his mother, and wrote to the girl for the first time, his regret for having unwittingly cast reflections upon her character rendering his letter warmer and tenderer than it need have been.

Some pretty play followed. That girl is an artist. She replied coyly, almost coldly. She was so proud of all who volunteered to serve their country that, knowing him personally, she had perhaps said more than was quite wise; perhaps he had been led to imagine that she cared more for him personally than was really the case. She did not know that she could ever come to love him. But she would always remain his warm friend. To have her as a warm friend did not satisfy Jeff. He wrote back begging that they should be sweet-hearts. She toyed with his proposal for a few weeks, then allowed him to gain his point. He was still dissatisfied, and urged an early marriage. That, she answered, was altogether too sudden and unexpected. She scarcely knew him. It was a serious step to ask her to take. He said he was coming home for a week-end in a month's time. Where he would be sent after that he knew not. If they did not marry then they might never be able to marry at all. Then, with a delightful show of self-renunciation, the maiden yielded, and went to interview the parish clerk on the matter of the publication of banns, Jeff attending to that business in the parish where he then dwelt.

I had heard no more from his mother, and had found enough to do in the meantime in causing to cease the allowances she had improperly received, when Jeff's week-end visit took place. He called on me radiantly happy. Looking at the poor fellow, his clean-limbed, athletic figure gracefully clad in sailor garb, his handsome manly face be-

tokening the utmost pride as he told me of his good fortune in securing the love and confidence of her who to-morrow would be his bride, I had not the heart to tell him I feared he was making a mistake. Yet I felt it to be so. For he spoke of the fact that the girl had given up her work and become dependent upon him after the first Sunday of publication of banns, he having allowed her ten shillings weekly for the last three weeks. It was apparent that he had been convinced that such was the proper thing to do. I realised, of course, that a girl who would suggest and accept such payments would make but a poor wife. But it would have been cruel and useless to tell him so; for he would not have understood, and the marriage would not have been prevented. He was married next morning, as he would have been in any case.

From that day every penny he can spare from his pay, the portion paid by his last civil employer, the Admiralty separation allowance—all is consumed by the extravagant, wasteful, idle habits of the wife he has burdened himself with. Too lazy even to wash and dress herself properly, she appears in the streets in a manner positively revolting. I wish she were the only woman guilty of such loathsome and disgusting conduct. That such-like form only a slight percentage of the wives of our fighting men, while satisfactory as far as it goes, does not minimise the gravity of their offence. It is melancholy to think what sort of homes and wives too many of our heroes must come back to. I cannot for a moment support those who, on the bald statements of girls whose main object may be just the securing of husbands, would hurry our soldiers and sailors into matrimony. There are few greater calamities than the schemed-for, loveless marriage. We may easily achieve a greater misfortune in seeking to remedy a lesser. We can do little to hinder a miserable

union, but we need not assist, with our eyes wide open, in bringing one about.

Jeff works at his duties like a man. His letters to me grow very infrequent. The last I had said nothing of his wife. Has he found out thus early the depth of the tragedy in which he is involved? I cannot tell. Only there is something painfully suggestive in his eagerness to see service abroad, untempered by a word about any whom he thinks would feel his going. I would not have mentioned his case, grand fellow though he really is, but for the hope that the mention may be of some service in ameliorating the lot of certain of our heroes. And Jeff is not his name: so I do him no disservice.

A drunken, cantankerous father drove my friend Rob to sea some five years ago. At times the father saw fiendish enemies walking on the wall-paper and lurking behind pictures. The doctors gave an ugly name to his complaint when that occurred. But his wife and child found no relief. It is wonderful what terror, what suffering, what privations, thousands of families endure on account of the insane craving of some parents for alcohol. The marvel to me is that our hospitals and asylums contain not so many, but so few, victims of our dipsomaniacs. If our legislators could see for themselves the terrible state of thousands of families during the ravings of parents bordering on *delirium tremens*, some better means would speedily be found for placing these half-mad creatures under restraint and in the way of a cure.

Alternating between the ravings of a lunatic and the grumblings of a cantankerous fool, according to whether he was drunk or sober, Rob's father led his mother and himself an awful life. Fortunately Rob was the only child. Now and then the woman

appeared at Court to obtain an order binding her husband to keep the peace. It was a poor thing to do. Yet she could do nothing else when terror overmastered her, as it periodically did. To send the man to prison would have been no remedy. Only increased poverty for the family would have come of that; not the offender's cure.

In a helpless sort of way I was wont to suggest this way and that the poor woman might try in dealing with her husband, until she cut me short one day by remarking with unconscious irony, "Aye, it's easy to say that. Anybody can deal with the devil but them that's got him."

How she struggled on till Rob was sixteen, God knows. Her husband then began to take a violent dislike to the lad, making insane insinuations as to his legitimacy, and threatening to murder him.

Tired of Court proceedings, the mother asked me to find Rob a ship. Scarcely had he started on a long voyage when his father committed suicide in a fit of madness. It was a year after that when the lad came back to help his mother to keep the home together.

I have often been asked how I account for the fact that the best husbands get the worst wives and the best wives the worst husbands. It is a mystery. I do not profess to be able to account for it at all. This woman was the best and noblest person imaginable. In spite of all her trials her home was always beautifully kept, and she herself was a pattern of long-suffering and patience. The remark I have quoted was not characteristic of her normal mind. It was just the wringings of a broken heart now happily healed.

What a change came over her life when her husband was gone, and her boy back home! Work like mine contains its disappointments; but gratitude like that this mother showed for trifling services I rendered her boy smoothes a hundred

disappointments. It was beautiful to see the happiness of that home. The lad never tired of working to show his affection for his mother; the mother planned and toiled to make home the most attractive place on earth for her son. Both succeeded in their aims. Rob had been paid at the rate of two pounds a week for the first time on the very Saturday before war was declared, and was full of plans for easing his mother's burdens and lightening her cares.

Then came the stirring call to arms. At first it did not seem to be an only son's duty to leave his widowed mother in obedience to the call. But as weeks passed and grave days pregnant with danger loomed ahead, as tales were told of incredible horrors suffered, and as England's safety demanded sacrifice from every man according to his ability, mother and son made up their minds to part. The decision was arrived at after careful deliberation. Rob volunteered to serve in a Naval Brigade; his mother offered her services to scrub the wards of a hospital. Both were accepted, and both commenced the service of their country on the same day.

I was privileged to see the following letter written by Rob to his mother from the Gallipoli Peninsula last June:—

“MY DARLING MOTHER,—Here I am, all alive and kicking—never a scratch, thank God. We have a tough row to hoe here—a lot stiffer than ever we bargained for. These Turks fight with the greatest gallantry. They are far less cruel than the Germans who command them. One can respect them as foes. Some of the prisoners I have spoken to give me the impression that they are confirmed fatalists. What is to be will be seems to be their motto. So they fight

with fanatical courage. This is well. For never was greater heroism than our own men have shown. It is grand to be with such splendid fellows—Australians, New Zealanders, Indians, Scotch, Irish, English; army men, navy men, transport men, mine-sweeper men, the R.A.M.C. men—they have all done deeds that will be sung while the world lasts.

“As I have said, this is a bigger job than we expected. When I wrote last I told you it would be over by now. But I never bargained for the enemy having so much ammunition and so many guns. I told you what sort of country it was—all in favour of the defenders. Still I did think we should have cleared away their wire entanglements and silenced their machine-guns long since. I admit that it is a slower business than I thought. But don't you worry, mother. We are getting on. I won't do any more prophesying; but I will say this: don't be surprised if you hear we are through any day. And don't be anxious about me. I have been brought safe so far, while many better men have fallen; and I feel I shall come out of everything safe and sound.

“I hear from chaps who have returned healed of slight wounds (and some of serious ones) how wonderful the nurses are. It bucks one up to feel how nobly the women are doing; how so many have given up every comfort to do their bit. And when the fellows are singing their praises, as they ought, I feel that I am blushing. I say nothing; but I'm feeling awfully proud that my own darling mother is doing all she can, as well as the other noble women I hear such grand stories about. I think of what you say of enjoying the work of scrubbing floors, and not minding a bit see-

ing sights now which at one time would have made you faint, because you are so anxious to help the fellows who suffer for Britain.

"I like what George said to the nurse; but most of us out here feel just like that. We should be skunks if we weren't proud to risk everything and to suffer anything when we know what depends upon our doing our duty. I've heard a man with both legs shot off cheering for England for all he was worth—and keeping at it till he fainted away. So I can understand what you say about George declaring he'd gladly lose four legs if he had them, if that would help the country through, and save it from being defiled by German feet.

"Cheer up, mother; and tell other people to cheer up. We may have a hard job; but with all the drawbacks we have had, and all the disappointments and unpleasant surprises, we are winning. It won't be so very long now before we've settled things in this quarter, once and for all. Then we're hoping for a go at those who bamboozled the poor Turks into this. And what we do here we shall repeat there, with God's help.

"While I am finishing this a letter from you comes along. I *am* glad to get it; just the old sort; one of a kind to cheer a fellow up and make him feel fit to do anything brave and noble. Thank you for it ever so much. I wish I were worthy of the best mother in the world."

His mother declares he is well worthy, and I am strongly inclined to agree. The Dardanelles business settled "once and for all," Bob, with all who have so gallantly fought there, will doubtless render further invaluable service in good time in Germany itself.

A member of the distinguished order of rolling-stones visited this city some time ago and worked here for about six months. When he took his departure, he left behind a son of fourteen years old named Abraham, but commonly called Ab. Living where he could, Ab picked up a livelihood on the streets, selling newspapers or matches, carrying parcels, or begging. He was frequently in the hands of the police for various petty offences until he was provided with proper lodgings and induced to settle down to regular work in a flour-mill. The influence of a new mode of life was seen in his greatly improved conduct. The police forgot his existence for four years. Then his father rolled back here and began to enquire for him. The fact that the father's earliest questions were addressed to members of the police force seems to suggest that he anticipated that through his own neglect the boy would have drifted into crime. Being unable to give the information wanted, the police referred the man to me. I fear I should have declined to facilitate the reunion of father and son but for the fact that the rolling-stone had told the one lie I can almost admire so as to tumble into the new army. When a man of forty says he is thirty-six in order to enlist I condone the offence cheerfully enough. In this case I rewarded the offender for committing it by putting him in touch with his son.

They saw each other only for a couple of hours. The father then went off to join his battalion. His martial spirit kindled by the paternal example, Ab meditated as to what he should himself do. Forgetting that more than one battalion exists in the British Army in a not unintelligible reluctance to serve with his father, Ab regarded khaki as not for him, and looked with favour upon the blue uniform of the Royal Navy. Ab's

enlistment in the Naval Division occurred a week after his father joined the Army. This is what he thinks of his new life:—

“Why don’t all them there paper lads, and match-sellers, and what not, come here? They’d have the time of their lives. Tell ’em there’s plenty of good grub, and better clothes than any of that lot ever had a chance of wearing afore. It’s a regular blooming picnic every day, and nought to pay neither; but money given you for enjoying yoursen.

“I’ve put on nearly a stone since I come here. That isn’t bad for six months, is it, Mester Holmes? Of course, I were a sight fatter when I joined than when you got me to live at Mrs Brown’s, and started me at the flour-mill. So if it’s done that for me, and if I’m a stone better than I was when I ’listed, what price them skeletons as is messing about streets?

“You’d be doing ’em a good turn, Mester Holmes—I’m sure you would—if you’d only kid ’em on to come. You’ve no idea how they all enjoys it as does take to this life, and how much better they all look! Then besides, they aren’t a ha’porth of good as it is. If the Germans did get here, they’d sell no matches, nor papers neither, and they’d have to carry parcels for nought till they dropped on the road and got kicked to death. But when they’ve had a bit of training they’ll make as good men as here and there one. Our captain says as us lads as have been picked up off the streets one time or another’s a sight sharper than them fellows as has been brought up with a feeding-bottle till they joined. We do know how to look after ourselves.

"I reckon as them as doesn't come soon won't have a deal more chance. For there's some talk of our Brigade going to the front. That'll end the war. They say as the Germans are talking about making peace. That'll be because they've heard as we're coming; I don't think! But, fair, Mester Holmes, if you buck 'em up a bit and make 'em come, they'll none of 'em have nought but praise for you when they find out what a grand life it is.

"I've heard from my father as he's gone to France. If he wallops Germans ought like he used to wallop me when he was nasty-drunk—hadn't had enough to make him pleasant, and too much to leave him sober—I shall expect them beggars to be sorry to see him. He doesn't write much—only when he's short of a bob or two. But it seems to suit him, does soldiering. He's as good as gold when he's some work to do and keeps off the booze. He says we shall see more than we want of one another after the war's over. He reckons to be a bit of a astrologer. He says as neither his number nor mine is up yet. They take better sorts than us first, happen. I hardly like to give you his message; but he says he should like to know whether you've had a letter from him. He's short of 'bacca, and he thinks he'd have heard from you if something hadn't gone wrong with the post. If you could see your way to writing to him he'd be glad, and it might do him good.

"Them wor clinking cigs you sent me. I'm sorry they're all done. But I don't want you to send me any more, not till you've seen about fellers at the front and on ships. I'm ever so much obliged to you, and I did

enjoy the cigs. I don't want you to think I aren't thankful. It's just a matter of this sort: we can get what we want, or else go without, and come to no harm. But a bit of 'bacca must be a comfort to the chaps what's fighting. Never mind now if they have been rotters aforetime. They're all right now. And you won't forget about them paper and match lads, Mester Holmes! You never had such a chance of clearing the streets."

Ab's thinly veiled anxiety to forego any little gift for himself in favour of his father met with the reward it deserved. It was harder to do what he suggested for the street boys. Many had joined already. The physique of the remainder was in most cases not up to the standard required for service. I was able to inform him a week after receiving his letter that twenty-three boys more or less well known to him had taken the course he so strongly recommended. They will not thank him if the war is brought to a conclusion by the prowess of his brigade before their own training is complete.

I imagine that fewer lads nowadays run away from home to join a ship than once was the case. I personally have known only seven. With one exception, these runaways have left good homes, to which, disappointed with the sea, they have been glad to return as soon as ever possible. The exception was one Nat, a lad of fifteen, of grand physique, good-looking, swarthy-complexioned, the ideal of the runaway sailor-boy of romance.

Nat's only sister Gwen is much like him both in appearance and disposition. Their parents possess about as much romance in their make-up

as a cabbage. Consequently both children have from their youth been much misunderstood.

There was the occasion when in the dim past their father missed his best frock-coat and their mother her newest gown on a certain Sunday morning. At the time the children were staying in the country with an aunt, and the church bells reminded them of their faults as they thought of their parents preparing for church at home. They had been playing a favourite game of theirs, pretending to be great people receiving guests, and had got themselves up in style for the occasion, making free with their parents' wardrobes to that end. Unluckily as Countess Gwen was being escorted to the stables to see a fine horse Earl Nathaniel had lately purchased, a fire-engine was heard galloping down the street. Fancy dress was hurriedly discarded, pushed in the stable, which was seldom visited, there being only imaginary horses at that establishment, and forgotten. The church bells suggested to them that, after a long series of lucky escapes, their meddling with their parents' garments appeared certain of discovery, with awkward consequences.

Their aunt, a person of good sense, impressed with a sudden and noticeable fall in their spirits, found what was troubling them and wrote an explanation to their parents. But before the letter arrived the coat and gown had been missed from the wardrobe and discovered in the stable. Burglars were suspected. The police were consulted. A detective, used to children, finding in the coat pocket a card on which was written, in Nat's childish hand, "Erl Nathanyell," and another bearing, in Gwen's handwriting, the title, "Cowntiss Gwendoline," in the pocket of the gown, remarked with a hearty laugh, "There's no need to trouble here. The children have been

romancing—playing at lords and ladies, like most of us have done in our time.”

Most of us; unfortunately, not all. These parents were among those who had not. It seems preposterous to state that they spent the Sunday in misery, thinking their children to be wicked and deceitful meddlers and mischief-makers, and wondering what course to take to lead them into the right way. The letter came in the morning to somewhat reassure them. Still they took a grotesquely serious view of the matter when, a week later, the children returned, thinking it necessary to whip them and to deprive them of a month's pocket-money.

If they had let the matter rest there it would not have been so ill. Instead of that they allowed it to rankle in their minds in such fashion that six years later they brought it up when on calling to ask my advice they described the trouble the children gave them. The special crime which led to this visit to me was the taking of a tin of cocoa, a tin of condensed milk, and a pound of castor sugar without leave from the mother's store cupboard for an abortive attempt to make chocolate while the maid was out and the parents' backs turned. When the smell of the badly burnt mixture representing their efforts as confectioners attracted the mother's notice, they appeared callous to reproofs for unwarrantably interfering with the stores. Indeed, they laughed. And when their father was informed of their conduct and sternly warned them that such doings would land them in prison, they laughed again. It was this callousness which troubled the parents more than anything else.

Apparently they had never known, or else had quite forgotten, that most young folk discovered in a fault are as near to laughing as crying. An attempt to refrain from crying, indeed,

frequently turns into a burst of laughter what might just as easily have been a burst of weeping. It is seldom callousness, it is mostly nervousness, which causes that unseasonable, unmirthful laugh; it may be also, partly, a feeling that the fault is being exaggerated and the warning overdone.

But this view could not be expected to appeal to any parents to whom it was necessary to put it. They went from me with but a poor notion of my fitness for the work I undertook to do. It was plain that they regarded their children as on the way to ruin. Probably they stiffened the discipline of the home in the hope of showing them their danger.

At any rate, about a year after that, they called to tell me that Nat had run away to sea. They were much distressed. Evidently they regarded me as in some way to blame. I had always taken too light a view of Nat's offences. If I had done something I might have saved him. What they dreaded had come to pass—Nat was completely ruined.

They seemed to have called merely for the purpose of letting me know what a poor hand they had found me in the understanding of child nature. I had advised them to allow their children a little room to let off steam. I saw what had happened without that. What would things have come to if my advice had been followed?

I suggested that if it had things would hardly have been worse. Still, they might rest assured that Nat would profit by going to sea. He would probably return before long with more ability to appreciate home than he had shown hitherto.

As if to prove that I was always wrong, Nat must needs take to the sea as a duck takes to water, and never return home except for a holiday. He became an officer, after his father, seeing that

he had decided on a career in the mercantile marine, had gone through the formality of making certain arrangements and payments on his behalf. At the beginning of the war he was transferred to the Naval Division to serve in an auxiliary cruiser doing useful work somewhere in the Irish Sea.

These records take little note of girls. Otherwise there would be matter enough to lengthen them out indefinitely. As the play of "Countess Gwen" has been mentioned, it is only fair to say something of her work. Like Nat, she grievously disappointed her parents. They had decided that she should be "a lady." She insisted upon being a nurse. In Gwen's case, as often happens, a love of romance in childhood was succeeded by a practical view of things in early youth. It was more to her taste at eighteen to seek to do something useful than to long for an ornamental career. The war found her qualified to take charge of a ward in one of the great hospitals for our wounded soldiers. She was among the first volunteers for that onerous and gracious service.

A while ago one of my wounded friends told me:—

"There was a sister at that hospital as comes from here. My, she is a grand 'un. When she doesn't think you're noticing, if you look hard at her, you can see she's that tired she can hardly hold up, as most of the nurses are, working day and night, God bless 'em. But if she thinks you're noticing, she's all smiles and all go. She's as graceful as a fawn, and as gentle as an angel. And she's that pretty, all the fellows in the hospital are in love with her. But there's no flirting with Sister Gwen. Nobody needs telling that. Everybody can see her whole heart's in her work. She attends to all alike: them that's suffering worst gets most attention; that's all.

When I knew she came from my own town I was that proud that I could hardly bear with myself. I says to the chaps in bed both sides of me, Yon's the sort we breed where I come from. Our lasses take a bit of beating, don't they?

"I reckon, mester, them nurses, with their cheerful, comforting ways of helping fellows, and never tiring, day and night, is doing as much for their country as anybody."

All will agree with the testimony of this war-worn veteran, who after serving in the Soudan, in South Africa, and in Flanders, still looks like doing further sterling work now that his wounds are happily healed.

More enthusiastic even than he, as becomes the hot blood of youth, is that able seaman of the Naval Division who called for a chat an hour ago, and who says:—

"We doff our caps to the best women in the world: there's nobody like our own women. You've no idea what they're like. They're grand. You ought to see what wonderful work they do, and how they do it. You'd say they're angels, like we all say as knows most about 'em."

He has a good word for the chaplains also:—

"They're men," he says; "if such of us as come through aren't better-living fellows for what they've done, it won't be their fault."

It is up to us who remain at home to do our work worthily too.

X.

WITH THE NEW ARMIES.

I HAVE not found it easy thus far in these sketches to choose which of the many men and lads of my acquaintance serving in various departments of national service should be selected as types. When I come to hundreds where I have previously had scores, I am faced with a difficulty further complicated by the varied abilities and attainments of so many men drawn from divers trades and professions, and who have flocked to the call from the four corners of the earth.

Four brothers now in the new army heard the call in Canada. Pushing aside as of no moment the splendid prospects opening out before them there, they hastened to get into touch with one another in their scattered posts, having conceived the notion of enlisting together. Unable to discover that all were of like mind until too late for the first Canadian Contingent, and afraid of staying behind until the fighting was done, they started post-haste for England at their own charges. Whether that was the best means they could have taken to arrive speedily on the field of battle, time will tell. At present they are doubtful as to the wisdom of their choice, having won rapid promotion¹ and being still busily employed in England training recruits. They tell me they fear lest

¹ All now, September 1915, hold commissions.

their eagerness for active service should be overlooked.

Twelve years ago the eldest of these brothers, a lad just over fourteen years old, of good address and tidily clothed, occupied a cell at a police station for a few hours. I saw him there, but could make nothing of him. His attitude of reserve was the same when the police responsible for the prosecution questioned him. Except to give his mother's address, and to say that she was a widow, he remained dumb to all enquiries.

An officer who had been despatched to the lad's home returned to state that the mother declined to appear before the Court on her son's behalf. He volunteered the opinion that the boy was a bad lot with whom the mother had experienced previous trouble. I personally saw no reason for this conclusion, though the mother's failure to appear on the lad's behalf gave some ground for suspicion that it might be true.

Apparently the Bench took the officer's view. The charge was extraordinary, looking at the sort of boy to whom it referred. He was alleged to have stolen growing potatoes. His personal appearance, coupled with his mother's non-attendance at Court, probably caused the magistrates to regard his action as the result of wicked and wanton mischief. The case being proved, he was fined ten shillings.

It is proverbially unsafe to judge by appearances. I accompanied the lad to his home. It was situated in a superior artisan neighbourhood. Its outside appearance differed little from that of the other three-score houses of the street. In the window of the front sitting-room a card was exhibited to tell that lessons in music, singing, painting, and French might be had there.

The lad went into the house to enquire if his mother would see me. I was asked to go in. The

mother's ill and emaciated appearance was so striking as to suggest instantly the true reason why she was unable to appear at the hearing of the charge against her boy. She was of medium height, very pale indeed, and had large, brilliant, dark eyes which spoke eloquently of terror. Her dress was of worn, rusty black. Her bearing was quiet and dignified notwithstanding her evident dread.

Explaining that I had made myself responsible for payment of her boy's fine, and that she need not immediately worry herself about the matter, I was gratified to discover that the widow was disposed to take me into her confidence somewhat. All there was to tell did not come out at that visit. As is usual, I learned the full story by degrees.

She was the only and motherless daughter of a country rector in the south of England, whose sole income, since the failure of a certain company years earlier deprived him of investments representing his entire private fortune, was the badly paid eighty pounds a year derived from his living. She had taught in the village school for two years. When eighteen she married the son of a doctor living in a small market-town near her father's parish. Her husband, seven years her senior, brought her to this city, being the foreign correspondent of a great firm here. The couple were most happy. Children were born. It had only been possible for the husband to insure his life for a hundred pounds, and to save about thirty, by the time they had been married eight years. But that troubled them little until the husband was stricken with consumption and died within six months. During his illness his employers paid his full salary. They also made some enquiries after his death. Perhaps the widow unconsciously gave them a false impression of her financial position. From my

knowledge of the firm I am inclined to believe such was the case. Anyhow, no further payments were made.

While the husband lay ill, his father and mother both died. Their estate barely sufficed to discharge liabilities. The only person left for the young widow to consult in any financial difficulty was her father; and to him she had consistently declined to go, feeling that he had more than enough worry of his own.

At the outset, too, she had that worldly inexperience which "worketh hope." It seemed to her that she could win a livelihood for her children by giving lessons in accomplishments to the young people of the superior working-class neighbourhood where she dwelt, the subjects she was prepared to undertake not being taught in the local public elementary schools.

She found it a sore struggle, but went grimly on for seven weary years. Bit by bit every penny was withdrawn from the bank. Then she parted with piece after piece of her furniture. About this time trade became depressed. Her pupils diminished in number until only two remained. On the occasion of my first visit I found a piano and two chairs in the sitting-room, but these had been lent by kind-hearted neighbours.

The neighbours' kindness was indeed the one sunny bit in a particularly dreary scene. Guessing the widow's poverty, they did what they could in face of a reserve which made it difficult to render help. They loaned the piano and chairs under the pretence that, her own piano and furniture being sold, their children would otherwise be deprived of lessons simply invaluable to them. No doubt the widow saw the underlying hope that she would obtain some means of living from other pupils concealed in this delicately bestowed act of friendship. Similarly they professed to receive

presents of eggs, butter, bread, and occasional joints of meat from mysterious relations in the country, and insisted that she should share in these. She was very grateful. She told of their goodness with a choking voice and with eyes full of tears.

But in spite of this generosity the family often went hungry. Getting up one morning, and finding only half a small loaf of bread in the house, the eldest of the four lads left that untouched. Obtaining a sack, he went out and helped himself to a stone or so of potatoes from a field about a mile away. An officer came up as he shouldered the sack. His mistaken attempt to relieve the distress of his family was fortunately frustrated.

Looking at a letter received to-day from that same lad, the picture of the scene I witnessed nearly twelve years ago rises vividly before me. That bare room—all the furniture worth selling gone for bread; the worn mother in her garb of rusty black; the four lads rising in regular steps in height according to their ages, eight to fourteen, their clothing carefully darned but threadbare, their pinched faces and lean frames telling of famine; the story of that long struggle, hinted at rather than told by the mother because I must hear of her inability to find the ten shillings her boy's error had cost—it all comes back. And the look that lad's face wore as he sought in dumb fashion to show his concern for the trouble his misdeed had brought, while feeling vaguely that his family ought not to starve! The widow's calm but reproachful face, and the younger boys' manifest inability to take in what it all meant: it is all very difficult for me to describe, but the remembrance of the scene will, I think, remain with me for ever.

How came it about that with such excellent neighbours doing what they could, none of posi-

tion and influence to secure adequate help to place the family out of want was found until the lad broke the law? It was impossible for a person of the widow's breeding and disposition to accept more from those good people whose help had been so generously bestowed. But what was the Church doing?—I use the term in its widest sense—for I know that divers heads of religious bodies were told of the family's distress. Strange that no one recognised that here was a fit object for the Church's activities—strange, were it not so common! One grows weary of Church work when it begins and ends with priests and ministers and buildings, organs and choirs and vestments, and the raising of money to maintain the effete paraphernalia of a religion which loses vitality and meaning as it ceases to interest itself in and to sacrifice itself for the desolate and oppressed.

To provide food, to secure medical advice, and to communicate with the south-country rector whose daughter's removal to her native air was considered by the doctor as absolutely necessary, was the work of an hour. When the rector had replied earnestly hoping that it might be possible for his "Mary to come home," although he was quite unable to provide railway fares for her boys and herself, I found it to take exactly twenty-four hours to raise the sum of thirty-five pounds I calculated would be necessary to see the family off, respectably clad, and able to enter the rectory without burdening the poor old clergyman with debt for three months. I knew I could by that time secure further help. The world is full of kind hearts. Wealthy persons gladly gave their large gifts. The neighbours who had done so much already, sat up after midnight to make garments and knit stockings. Fourteen days after her boy's offence, the widow reached her old home with her three younger sons. Her father, seventy-

nine years old, mildly reproved her for not acquainting him with her dire need. She enquired what beyond grieving him could have been achieved by so doing. She was right. He had long lost touch with friends able to help.

Not that such could not be found: a hint unconsciously dropped in a grateful letter to myself made it practicable to communicate with one who well remembered an old college friend across nearly sixty years. He had the will, as fortunately he had the power, to open a liberal purse for the benefit of the family. The three younger lads were sent to school at his charges. He made a generous allowance to drive the spectre of poverty from the rectory door. By an oversight, pocket-money for the boys was forgotten, but a lady who heard of the difficulty set it right. Meanwhile the eldest boy was apprenticed to an electrician in this city who sacrificed a heavy premium quite cheerfully, but let the lad lose nothing for that. The boy settled down to his employment with a will. He lodged with the neighbour who lent the piano, and cheered me on his visits for seven years with the merry brightness of his face.

For awhile it looked as if the changed condition and prospects of her family would assist towards the mother's recovery. Her father, no longer daily engaged in a hand-to-hand struggle for existence, certainly thought her on the way to a cure. For herself, she well knew that help had come too late. Stimulated by the unwonted excitement of good fortune, she bore up for six months, then faded suddenly and was gone. Her father saw the end, and himself departed within a month.

The three schoolboys' abilities not being held to lie in the direction of book-learning, they were in due course recommended to my Canadian friends as farm pupils. By the time the youngest

was sixteen years old, they were all satisfactorily started in a career for which they proved themselves admirably suited.

As soon as he had completed his apprenticeship, the electrician carried out a plan he had formed for rejoining his brothers. He secured a situation in a Canadian town, not too far away from the farms they lived at to prevent him from occasionally enjoying their company. And after four years they return together to fight for England! I do not apologise for taking a proud interest in them. I shall follow their doings closely. Certainly they will give a good account of themselves.

Quite different was the early experience of a man who came from New Zealand to enlist. He suffered from too great an abundance of the good things of this world in his home, and rebelled against the authority of his parents at seventeen years old. Jeshurun, having waxed fat and kicked, was brought to me under the name of John to see if I could get him abroad, his father being willing to do anything or pay anything to be rid of him, and his mother declaring he would be the death of her if he stayed at home. He had no special vices save that a love of showing off had caused him on several occasions to engage in controversy with police who sought to enforce against obstructionists a bye-law giving pedestrians the use of footpaths, and I had met him a few times in Court in consequence. The same love of showing off had led him on several occasions to defy parental authority, and a free fight between father and son had ended in John's ignominious defeat and withdrawal to the house of an aunt, who soon grew tired of his company. But his parents had also seen enough of him for the

present, and preferred that he should remain away. Hence their application to me.

I was interested in the father. He was a manufacturer in a fairly good way of business. His character had changed little since as a young man he formed one of a company who went for a day's outing and reached home at night much chagrined to find the public-houses closed, whereas they had hoped to continue their conviviality at the home of one of the party. With no drink, this seemed impossible, until a bright idea occurred to John's father, whose elder brother, one of the company, had complained that he was "dying for a glass of ale." He set forth with a friend to a neighbouring tavern. It was midnight; the host was asleep in bed, and must needs be awakened to open the window and call out—

"Well, who's there? What do you want?"

"We want some brandy," was the reply; "our Charlie's *that* bad; you'll have to come down and let us have some. He says he's dying."

The landlord had a good heart. He hurried downstairs half-dressed, and enquired exactly what was required.

"Two gallons of ale, half a gallon of porter, half a gallon of whisky, and a quart of brandy," was the modest reply.

"My word," said the landlord, "I'm glad I heard you. Poor old Charlie; he *must* be bad!" and they secured the liquor and went home triumphant.

The same success had not been achieved in the bringing up of John, who seemed to inherit his father's contempt for the law, while choosing other methods for displaying it. It was a relief to the father when I found a master out in New Zealand willing to take John at a fairly high premium, on the understanding that he was to treat him as his own son and to make him into a capable fruit-farmer.

I am afraid that John found a home out there more rough than he had pictured. His earlier letters said a good deal in favour of the climate, but not much in favour of anything else, and he evidently had to work harder than he cared for. By degrees he came to write more cheerfully. He was in a rather out of the way place, and his letters were infrequent; but he began to tell of good prospects, and finally of the purchase of the farm, by means partly of his own earnings and partly of money advanced by his father, when his master at last retired from business.

He left all cheerfully behind to reply to his country's call. Some slight blemish caused the doctor to reject him when he offered to serve with the New Zealand contingent. With his usual impetuosity he at once booked a passage and came to England at his own expense. Arriving in London, within an hour he enlisted as a private in the new army, gaining promotion to the rank of sergeant when he had been a few months with the Colours.

A clerk whom I had sent out to a master in Hong-Kong, after retrieving a character he had jeopardised here, turned up in khaki to let me see that he was also a "Kitchener man," returned at his own expense to help to see his country through. A stoker who threw my kindness in my face by deserting the ship in which I had provided him with a berth after giving him the necessary sea-kit, repented himself, and worked his passage from Costa Rica to appear before me in the King's uniform and to express a determination to make amends for the past. From Mombasa came another clerk whose wife's infidelity had caused a separation, and who seemed unable afterwards to manage in England without taking drink and proceeding to his wife's house for the purpose of indulging in violence which the police

had to restrain. He was persuaded to go abroad, and he won an excellent character during the three years he stayed there, returning to fight the cause of the women of England, having read an account of the sufferings of their Belgian and French sisters which fired him with a burning desire to render such doings impossible here. Knowing his sad experience, I marvelled at this.

Men at home whom I had helped, some but one, some as many as sixteen years before, came by the score every week for the first three months of war to tell me they had determined to temporarily leave their situations and go at their country's call. Most of these were labouring men, but not a few had climbed into posts of responsibility from the humble start I had been enabled to afford them. The larger proportion were unmarried, but a sprinkling were married men.

One who specially interested me had, when he last called before the outbreak of war, received a disappointment at my hands. Eight years before that, as a youth, he had got into bad company and narrowly escaped being sent to a Reformatory for theft. He was handed over to my care, and did well in a situation secured for him. He was a good-looking youth who dressed with care and taste when his leisure hours came round. It was natural, perhaps, that clothing and cigarettes for himself, and chocolates for his sweetheart, should exhaust his spare cash. The decision of a married friend to part with home and furniture here so as to take his wife with him to a new country where a better post could be had, reminded my old *protégé* of his lack of means and of my own existence. When he called I felt uncommonly pleased at what I regarded as his long memory for small favours, and greeted him most heartily, thus un-

consciously helping him to divulge the real object of his visit.

He told me of his friend's decision to dispose of the furniture. The purchaser of the furniture could become tenant of the house. Houses were hard to get. He was courting, and, in thinking of matrimony, had observed this difficulty. Here was a golden opportunity. If he had five-and-twenty pounds, he could secure wife and house and furniture, and be happy for ever. Could I lend him twenty-five pounds?

His confidence in me was pathetic to behold. I do not believe that the possibility of my refusal had ever entered his head. The money was as good as his. It was more than likely that he had arranged to marry the girl, take the house and buy the furniture, on the strength of his faith in one who proved a weak reed to lean upon. I will draw a veil over the sequel. There is something painful in the contemplation of shattered illusions, and it was noble of him to come to me again after that.

With a sweetheart still faithful, and waiting till the war shall end ere she marries her soldier boy—for with great good sense she declines to take that step until they have their own home, as yet unprovided—he serves as a lance-corporal, and looks shortly to share in the danger and glory of active service.

I should imagine that few men can claim the distinction of having once been dead, and afterwards accompanying a son to the recruiting office. I know a man who owns that honour. Like so many more, he came to enjoy the pleasure of my acquaintance from a series of appearances before the Bench for drunkenness. He was a highly skilled workman, earning very large wages. In-

deed he claimed to be the finest craftsman in the world in his own particular line, and his employers supported his claim. Unfortunately he was content to work only three days a week, having too much urgent business to transact at various public-houses to allow him to put more time than that at his master's disposal. Long use to his vagaries had reconciled the employers to depending upon his services for three days a week only. They protested, however, when his other business began to further encroach upon their time. When he had on three successive occasions absented himself for a whole fortnight, well knowing that a huge accumulation of work, difficult for any one else to perform, awaited him at the manufactory, the employers determined to teach him a lesson.

Having on a certain occasion paid his fine at the Police Court, and listened with contemptuous pity to one of the futile appeals I was wont to make to him whensoever he appeared there, if haply I might some time induce him to consider and amend his ways, he went to his place of employment seeking to resume work after a fortnight's absence "on the drink."

To his astonishment he was informed by the timekeeper at the gate that he was not to be allowed to start work until the senior partner had seen him, and he was left fuming in the street until that gentleman appeared, to say—

"Well, you've come, have you. You can go to the workshop, and fetch your traps, and clear off. We don't want you here. You'll work here no more."

"What!" exclaimed the bewildered fellow, "not start again: why, you can't do without me. Who's going to do my work? I've got you there! You know very well there's nobody else can do it but me."

"Yes, that's quite right," was the answer;

"that's what's caused us to let you have so long a run. We've been thinking things over for a good while, and we've made up our minds at last, now we can't even depend upon you for three days a week. Three times in four months you haven't been near the place for a whole fortnight together. We are behind hand with some of our best orders and muddled up with others, while three have been cancelled all through you. We don't know where we are. What is certain is that we can't go on like this. So we've done a bit of hard thinking, as I told you, and faced matters out. We shall have to do without you when you're dead, and we shall get through somehow."

"So we'll begin now. You're dead: you've no business here any longer. You can fetch your bits of traps out of the shop, and go and do as a dead man should do, give over bothering folk. Bury yourself, or get somebody else to bury you. Do what you like; we've no more use for you."

With that, the senior partner walked away, leaving the deceased to gather his few possessions in a dazed sort of way, and depart home to consider what a dead man, with power to move and think remaining in conjunction with particularly insistent fleshly appetites, could find on earth to do.

The chief trouble was that no other firm anywhere that he knew of attempted the class of work demanding his peculiar skill. In his former situation he ruled as a prince because he there found employment for his singular talent. Where ordinary ability alone was required, he must take rank with men of ordinary skill, and be content with their wages. That meant he must work a full week for less than half his former earnings in three days. It was a depressing prospect. And the soreness of the humiliation lay in the fact that the work he really delighted and excelled in

when moderate sobriety raised him to his better self must go out of the country to find a craftsman able to accomplish it with a chasteness of finish at all approaching his own.

For a fortnight he made daily attempts to obtain a further interview with the senior partner, whose practical common-sense refused to waste time dealing with dead workmen, until at deceased's fifteenth call he sent a note to the corpse telling it that if it could produce a signed total abstinence pledge, and provide a surety to guarantee that it would present itself for employment by the firm, sober and industrious, every working week-day, its application should be considered:

I chanced to call immediately upon its return home after the note had been delivered. Its face looked very troubled when I first caught a glimpse of it, but brightened somewhat at sight of me.

I asked, "How are you getting on?"

"I'm dead," it replied lugubriously, resuming a woe-begone appearance; "I'm not getting on at all, lad."

An explanation was obviously needed. It was given me. The note was produced, with a request that I would take its pledge and provide the required guarantees on its behalf. That was arranged easily, because I realised that I was dealing with the remains of a man of great determination of character, who when he made up his mind was entirely to be trusted, and now declared—

"It's got me down at last. It's laid me out fairly, and made a dead man o' me. I'll never touch another drop. A dead man needs no drink."

He was as good as his word. The unworthy home he had been content with hitherto, speedily gave place to one of a pair of attractive semi-detached villas in a pleasant part of the town. In a few years his considerable earnings enabled him

to purchase that pair of houses. He did much also in the way of helping certain lads to a better way of living. His own boy who had gone abroad at sixteen years old, tired of his father's ways, returned to fight for Britain, and he brought him proudly to me when the recruiting-sergeant whom they visited had unceremoniously accepted the broad-shouldered, splendid fellow for service with the new army. I hear frequently from the father of his son's progress. He has already attained the rank of sergeant, and does not appear unlikely to gain a commission ere the war is done.¹

I have private reasons for hoping this will be so. For I was responsible for aiding the lad to get away in the day of his father's folly. Taught no trade, in spite of his father's extraordinary ability at his own craft, the boy, with a brother who died, gained a living on the streets, and in so doing got himself into numerous difficulties with the police. His bright face and sharp wit made him always a favourite of mine. Even as a gutter-snipe he was a gentleman; kind, truthful, brave, manly, considerate of others. He went to a man who followed his father's trade, and who occupied a post in France. There he was taught what his father had not thought it worth while to teach him until it was too late. For by the time the father came to his right mind, the son had grown fond of the land of his adoption, and had been placed on the highroad to success by the instruction of the friendly compatriot he found there. When he heard his country's call he gave me at least as much cause for pride as he gave his father, such had been my interest in him. And I may as well own quite frankly that I know of no man more likely than he to hold a commission with dignity.

¹ While this volume is in the press I learn that he is gazetted as a Second Lieutenant.

It is notoriously an ill wind that blows nobody any good. The breeze that blew a trio of young brothers into Court some eleven years ago proved to me most fragrant. The lads had fallen in love with, and gained illicit possession of, certain pigeons. Prosecution followed, much to the disgust of the lads' father, a manufacturer who justly prided himself on a family reputation for honesty extending back to the foundation of his comparatively small but excellent business three hundred years ago. It was a case that might quite easily have been settled out of Court, being the result of thoughtless folly rather than criminal intent. The lads were merely ordered to pay the costs of the prosecution, since their father had already visited the offence with a heavy hand.

The case became memorable for me because of the fact that a small service I was able to render constituted me thenceforward a trusted friend of the family, to the great gain of many a man and lad requiring a new start in life. When the three pigeon-fanciers volunteered to serve in the new army, they took with them or were followed by nine others who had visited the Police Court on one charge or another, and who had each taken full advantage of an opportunity to reform offered by the friendly employer to whom I introduced them.

One of these nine was once a heavy drinker. At twenty-three years old he found himself faced with the problem of paying a stiff fine, supporting a wife and two babies, and at the same time finding employment. The latter proposition was the most difficult: that solved, the other two were rendered possible. But he had tired out five former employers, and knew of nobody willing to try him again. I took him along to this friendly manufacturer so fortunately blown across my path. Encouraged by several earlier successes, I frankly

stated how things stood, explained that the man had signed the total abstinence pledge, and begged that if possible a chance might be afforded him.

My friend looked him up and down critically.

"You're married, I hear," he said; and getting a nod in reply, proceeded: "How many children have you?"

Being told there were two, he went on, "God help them, and God help your poor wife, with such a tassel as you. Now, what good have you been to them or to anybody, so far? I'll tell you what I'd do with suchlike as you if I'd my way: I'd give you a dose of chloroform. That's what I'd do, if it weren't for the law. You look what you are—a drunken, lazy good-for-nought. It's all right this gentleman (myself) bothering about you; but you know you're not worth it."

The man felt that things were going altogether against him, and piteously implored for a chance.

"Yes," he said, "I know I've been a right-down bad lot. But I'll have no more drink as long as I live. For God's sake give me a start, master; I'm thinking of my wife and children. I wouldn't ask you for myself."

There was a world of meaning in the tone with which this appeal was uttered. I knew my friend well enough to understand that he was seeking by scorn to make the man thoroughly ashamed of himself. Seeing his purpose was achieved, he went on—

"Well, I'll try you. You've signed the pledge. Take your jacket off and make a start. While you come to work at the proper time in the morning, stick to your job all day and keep off the drink, you'll have a place here. If you turn idle, off you go. And the first drop of drink you touch, you've done. Now get to that trough, and buckle to like a man."

Having watched his new workman begin grind-

ing heavy knife blades in promising fashion, the manufacturer took me into his office and closed the door.

"He'll want a bit of looking after," was his opinion of the fellow. "If he sticks to his work, he'll do. It's my idea that he goes on the drink because he doesn't care a deal about work."

I suggested that it might be that, while not really idle, love of drink had got a strong hold over him, and that if his appetite for alcohol were overcome he would prove a capital workman—that opinion having been expressed to me by the man's former employers.

"Then I suppose you think it would be as well for me to sign the pledge to help him to keep straight," my friend replied.

I assented, welcoming what I thought would be excellent.

"Nay, lad!" was the quick retort; "I thought you'd more sense than that. My job is to keep him at work. I don't know that I shall manage it. I shall have enough on. But if I can keep him at it, working overtime every night; and if his wife will smarten up and have things comfortable for him at home when he gets there, you looking in every week or so and bucking him up, we may pull him straight among us.

"It would be easy for me to say to him, I'll sign the pledge to help you a bit, my lad. But what good would that do? He knows well enough I'm no guzzler. He knows our cases don't stand on all fours. If he broke down and I kept on, he'd say that we didn't start fair. He had too big a handicap.

"It's the handicap I'm setting myself to remove. I must get him to enjoy work as much as I do before we think about steps that beg equality in other things.

"Besides, why should I give up my glass of beer,

at dinner and supper on the off-chance that, in some mysterious way, it's going to help him. He doesn't drink because I do, and he won't give it up if he knows I've given it up. He won't consider me in the matter at all, only so far as he knows he must do to keep his work, if he wants to keep it. Because he's the wreck he is through drink, I have the right to say to him: If you work here you shan't drink; and if you will drink, you shan't work. I know that he'll never do his duty to me otherwise.

"I'm going into this so that we may understand one another. From what you've said to me from time to time, I'd an idea you thought I ought to be a teetotaller to help your men a bit more than I am doing. That's why I asked you just now if you thought I ought to sign the pledge to help that fellow. Now it's settled. Bring me a man or a lad whenever you like. If I can give him a start, I will; and if there's any good in him, I'll do my best to bring it out. But I don't pretend I'm going to turn teetotaller. I don't see that anybody has the right to expect *that*, considering that I'm a moderate man using drink without abusing it.

"I go to the same pub as our Bishop. It's a rare, good, respectable pub, and I've no notion of leaving it."

I saw that my friend had dropped into humorous vein, but failed to grasp what he meant, and enquired—

"How can that be? The Bishop is a teetotaller."

"You think so; well, perhaps he is; still he goes to our pub, and I like him; and I'm not going to give the house up now he's started coming.

"It'll be about a month since I saw him and two other parsons coming out wiping their mouths. It looked something like. It reminded me of old

times, before parsons got so professional. They may be more pious men now than they used to be for all I know, but they're not half as well known to the people, and haven't a tenth part of the influence they used to have when they mixed more with folk in their everyday life."

I found that my friend knew little of the Bishop, and liked him chiefly because of that exhibition of human nature he had witnessed. As a matter of fact, he patronised a public-house associated with the Earl Grey movement, which the Bishop had visited with two incumbents with a view to testing that experiment in temperance reform. The wiping of mouths referred to by my friend has been explained to me by the clergy concerned as involuntary, if it took place at all; though they admit having sampled non-intoxicants supplied at the house.

Whatever I may think of my friend's views, still unchanged, I have nothing but praise for his practical work with such as had the great advantage of coming to him for help out of the slough they had fallen in. The man whose case has been selected illustrates the sort I mostly took him. That man remained in his employment for six years, then joined the Colours with his master's sons, leaving his wife and now four children amply provided for, as are the dependants of all else who went similarly from that patriotic and generous manufacturer's service.

During the whole of those six years I never heard a complaint. The man lost all desire for intoxicants. My chief worry at the outset was to get his wife to abstain herself, and to break with neighbours too fond of drinking and gossiping to allow of proper attention being given to domestic duties. Indeed, it has never been possible for me to feel entirely free from anxiety on her account. I arranged for the removal of the family into a

likelier neighbourhood twelve months after the husband made the new start which proved so satisfactory, and things went much better, though I felt forced to pay a weekly call to assure myself that the wife was not slipping into careless and untidy ways. She is an ill-trained housewife. She muddles through and does her best, is most good-natured and of amiable temper, but will, I fear, require friendly supervision as long as she lives. I am the more despondent on her account, as I see a strong tendency on her part to think that no necessity exists to keep the home so nicely now her husband is away: the children and herself can manage with anything until he comes back.

Making all allowance for the anxiety she feels for his safety, it is a great pity that, like thousands of her sisters, she fails to realise that, in doing all she can to occupy her time industriously in the home, lies her present greatest peace of mind and her strongest future hope. Praying for her husband's safe and victorious return, and working to worthily take both his place and her own for their children's good, and for the future wellbeing of the family, that is the attitude I delight to find any wife assuming.

It comes out beautifully in one case well known to me. No one could call the man a bad sort of fellow, though he had contrived to gain the reputation of a sad drunkard. His way of going on caused him to be engaged at odd jobs instead of in regular work when I set out to help him a few years ago. At that time he had earned no more than ten shillings a week for fully twelve months, and he seldom found his way home with half that meagre sum.

His wife went out washing and cleaning at the houses of more prosperous folk, and earned herself

double the amount her husband brought in. There were five children under twelve years old. It was a standing miracle to me how she managed to keep them neatly dressed and properly fed. The clothing of girls, she explained, was an easier problem than the clothing of boys, and it was fortunate that her children were all girls. She could soon run overalls together to keep them tidy. She did not show me how the money came for material which must be bought, or for the food which, however plain, could not be had for nothing. Perhaps she could not have explained that to anybody. It is a gift some women possess in a high degree, the laying out of a small sum to great advantage. This woman is perhaps the best manager I ever knew. She is also scrupulously honest, and was never a penny in debt anywhere.

Her husband, a big, powerful, good-natured-looking fellow, was thirty-two years old when first I knew him. The son of a carting-contractor, he had been permitted to work or play according to his fancy. His father died when he was twenty-one years old, leaving him a fairly remunerative connection, fourteen horses and ten carts, with sufficient capital to enable him, by the exercise of moderate industry, to continue to extract such a living from the business as would place him among men liable to pay income-tax.

His first step was to marry; that was also, for him, his best step, considering the kind of woman who consented to become his wife. He kept on all his father's old hands, which was wise; but he left them without his father's firm control, which was unwise. They speedily became careless; they quarrelled a good deal among themselves about duties which he should have arranged for them; many things were left undone; the business grew steadily less remunerative as customers became dissatisfied and transferred their patronage else-

where. Four horses died. There was no money to purchase others. Still the same number of men remained. It became difficult to pay wages. When the difficulty had been demonstrated on several pay-days, the best of the men set to work to find other situations, leaving comparative wastrels on his hands. Debts accumulated; the inevitable end came before long, the Official Receiver taking charge of the concern. All this happened because the man was unfit to be over others. The popular notion in his neighbourhood that he was idle and a heavy drinker was erroneous. He was simply in his wrong place as an employer, and he drank as much out of a bewildered feeling that he must pass time somehow and forget his troubles as from any other cause.

He made quite a good impression on me at our first meeting with his open, honest, pleasant face. I go a good deal by first impressions, and they are seldom wrong. It was easy to understand when I came to sift the case why he had found nothing better than casual employment since his business failed. He had not sought work outside the district in which he was regarded as an idle, drunken person. No one had employed him as a workman; so far as he had been employed at all it was as an act of charity. The obvious course was to start him working in a locality where he was unknown. He had never liked the charge of horses and carts. His father was mistaken in not apprenticing him to the cabinet-making trade, which was his fancy. I got a cabinet-maker to employ him as a labourer, and never knew a man do better than he during the next four years.

No longer addicted to drinking habits, he gave his whole mind to his work, and, being thoroughly interested in it, was advanced to a post as a skilled workman by an employer who cared nothing for trades-union rules, and would have no interference.

The change of life was reflected at home; the thrifty wife, relieved of the necessity of going out to work, devoted her entire energies to making home attractive, while her own personal appearance and that of her children were pleasing enough to make any rational man proud of the honour of working for their support.

I was considerably surprised when at thirty-six years old he came to me to tell of his determination to enlist because of his horror at doings in Belgium. He was much touched by something he had read of as happening there to a mother and her four young daughters, and the thought of anything like that befalling his own family had fired him with a determination to fit himself to assist in preventing it by all means in his power. His wife acquiesced in his decision. It was noble of her, for that was before the day of increased allowances, and she calmly faced the certainty that what was involved was her going out washing and cleaning once more. As a matter of fact, she did take up such work again, and continued it for eight weeks, when a more ample rate of State remuneration, added to half wages granted during his absence by her husband's employer, who regards him as on holiday so long as his country has need of his services, rendered it unnecessary.

Instead of that she keeps her home spotless and beautiful, and fills up her own and her children's spare time in knitting socks for the soldiers, the usual output of the family being six pairs a week, while at times of pressure nine pairs have been managed. The wool, no small consideration, is purchased from money left out of State payments and employer's bounty when the simple requirements of the family have been met. I said something yesterday in praise of this splendid patriotism, and received the quiet reply, "It's only right we should all be doing our best. Some of us

can't do much, but we're glad to do what we can. And we're all praying hard."

To part with husband and father, perhaps for ever upon earth; to cheerfully pinch and scheme in these days of dearer food so as not to restrict purchases of wool; to knit continuously every spare moment, and meanwhile to maintain a home so beautifully that whensoever, if he be spared to return from that country to which he has gone to fight for Britain, the one who is never absent from the thoughts of wife or children shall feel all is arranged for his welcome—that, I think, is doing very much indeed. And no doubt it can only be accomplished by those who are "glad to do what they can" and are "praying hard."

A youth who got into trouble from collecting eggs where a poultry-keeper claimed the sole right of collection, was given into my care by a kind-hearted Bench. He turned out a most capable blacksmith after serving an apprenticeship, but never lost his old love of mischief. He seldom came to see me without leaving me with the impression that he was meditating some escapade, and numerous were the complaints I received of the pranks he played in his spare time. He had a partiality for annoying lovers in some dimly-lighted parlour by contriving an ingenious instrument which would maintain a persistent tapping at the window; and among other complainants, people who went early to bed laid on him the blame for disturbing their slumbers by knocking at their doors without due cause.

The call for men appealed to him as offering that variety which is the very spice of life. He was among the first half-dozen of my friends to respond. Covering his family with his cap, he has gone to France eager to fight and ready to die for

those to whom he has hitherto been little more than an annoyance. His knowledge of farriery and his skill as a blacksmith make him a valuable member of the field battery to which he is attached. When he gets to Berlin, according to his letters, he looks to have some fun. It will be clean, if annoying, and I wish him success in achieving his purpose to the full. I shall not be greatly surprised if he earns the Victoria Cross. There is no sort of dare-devil bravery of which he is not capable. The new army contains crowds of men of his stamp. Great deeds may be confidently expected of them.

Such have often the fortune to be associated with men of quite another sort—men who at home were comparatively of a tame-rabbit-keeping disposition. There are, broadly speaking, three distinct sets of boys who get into the hands of the police: those who err from too exuberant spirits, blundering into crime; those whose spare time hangs heavily, who have no one to take reasonable interest in them, and to provide them with proper employment and amusements, and who slide imperceptibly into the wrong path; and those whose disposition or training renders them liable to take to a criminal career. The middle set has the largest membership. It is not sufficiently realised how many young people grow up in our towns untouched by any elevating influence outside our public elementary schools except they chance to fall into error for which they have to answer at the Police Court. I would put the number as high as thirty thousand in any town containing four hundred thousand inhabitants. That would mean seventy-five out of every thousand; and I am afraid my estimate is too low.

From statistics compiled during the past seventeen

years on home visits to boys and young men under twenty-one years old, I ascertain that out of an average of one thousand six hundred and ten persons appearing annually before the Court on charges ranging from street football to burglary, only seventeen were found professing to be in any way attached to any branch of the Christian Church—attending any Church, Sunday School, or Bible Class, belonging to a Boys' Brigade, Boy Scout patrol, Boys' Club, or any similar movement. Almost invariably these young people suffered under defective home influence, their parents being mostly indifferent. The lads did as they pleased. Whether they conducted themselves as self-respecting citizens or as hooligans was their affair. The parents could only with the greatest difficulty be got to realise their own responsibility. That was the rule. It came about, in my judgment, from failure to realise that neither Church nor State has yet relieved parents from the discharge of all duty towards their children. There is a muddle-headed notion widely prevalent, that so long as nobody complains things are well, and when things go ill some official or other appointed for the purpose will set them right. The last people responsible for the moral conduct of juveniles are the parents. Apart from bringing them into the world, and feeding, clothing, and sheltering them as taste and ability allow, parents would seem to have really very little to do with their children.

Labouring in this unpromising field, I have seen an annual average of five hundred and forty-six young men and lads out of the one thousand five hundred and ninety-three mentioned as untouched by any elevating influence save that of the elementary schools, gathered into various organisations established to further the moral welfare of youths. It is a singular fact that of that annual average of five hundred and forty-six, only nine are found,

year by year, to get into further scrapes. The value of Sunday Schools, Bible Classes, the Boys' Brigade, the Boy Scouts' movement, Boys' Clubs, and similar organisations, is thus startlingly demonstrated. The truth is that from being in regular and sympathetic touch with seniors really and actively interested in their welfare, few boys will be found to stray into doubtful paths.

They learn instead to plant their feet firmly in the way of duty. I know six hundred and eighty men and youths, turned that way by men engaged in one or another of the various agencies mentioned, who are now training with the forces called into being by the genius of Lord Kitchener. One Bible Class has supplied eighteen, another seventeen, and another sixteen. From Boys' Brigade companies more than three hundred have joined. Other similar organisations have rendered similar splendid service. Whatsoever was once their state, these men and youths are now of our bravest and best. No praise can be too high for those who brought out into play the highest in their nature, and are in many cases sharing with them the hardships and discomforts incident to growing fit to serve Britain worthily in a day soon to come. The number both of instructors and instructed preparing for active service would be greatly enhanced but for the fact that hereabouts so many are engaged in the production of munitions and may not volunteer to serve in the field. It may be of interest if I state quite accurately the total of those with whom I have been brought into contact these seventeen years, who under beneficent influence found a better way of living, and who now discharge as a high privilege and solemn duty the work their country lays upon them of producing ships and armour-plate, guns and shell, rifles and bayonets. They number seven thousand two hundred and five. What we all know to be true of those serving with the Colours is true also of these.

The foremen at the great works tell me, "The fellows are splendid ; they will work till they drop."

I know that what these are doing scarcely falls within the inference of the title of this chapter. It is borne in upon me irresistibly by the fact that a caller I had an hour ago, as he dragged himself wearily homewards after working thirty-six hours at a stretch, longs to join a brother who serves in the new army. His brother, a carpenter, might go ; he, a shell-turner, must stay here. Both became members of a company of the Boys' Brigade on the same day, were weaned thereby from courses that threatened early ruin, and transformed into sturdy, self-respecting citizens. The tired shell-turner is just as honourable a person as his warrior brother, but, like many more, I find it easier to do homage to the lad in khaki than to him in workaday civilian clothing. It seems well to confess that fact.

The carpenter-soldier gave little promise of martial spirit whensoever I saw him before the war. He seemed far more suitable for the prosaic occupation he abandoned at the call to arms than for military service. As it chanced, his instructor is a friend of mine—an ex-soldier who rejoined at fifty years' old to assist in training recruits. Speaking of him and of suchlike quiet fellows, this experienced non-commissioned officer tells me—

"They make grand soldiers ; they learn their duties quickly ; they have joined with an object ; they are mostly ready for any sacrifice, and very many are pious youths who have been taught to put their trust in God and do their best. When it comes to fighting, I've no fear for them. Before they go into action they'll pray as if they could do nothing for themselves, and when they get to work they'll go at it as if they could do everything for themselves. And that's combined piety and good sense. I don't know what Cromwell's army was like. I've been led

to believe it contained a good many hypocrites. But it must have had a fair sprinkling of fine men to do what it did. Our new army has few hypocrites; they are fine fellows almost to a man, the lot I have. So I make out it's a much grander army than Cromwell's. And you'll see it will do the greatest work the world has ever seen."

I quite believe it will. For certainly it contains thousands of men capable of anything noble and heroic. I will mention one more. He came to me for taking apples from an orchard when he was fourteen years old. Much damage, not alleged as his fault, had been wrought by fruit-stealers. It was just his misfortune to be the only person caught. It was proved that he took a pocketful of apples, but at the request of the owner of the orchard he was allowed to leave the Court with a caution.

He had been working in unsatisfactory fashion for a few months since leaving school. The place at which he found employment being closed for three days a week from lack of orders, left him with too much time on his hands. Lads were wanted badly enough at other manufactories, but his father took little interest in him; and his mother was dead. I found out that when I was asking the lad a few particulars of his home life. Instead of answering a question about his mother, he began to fumble in his bosom, and at length produced a little red flannel bag secured round his neck by a tape. He was a sturdy, healthy, handsome lad, with ruddy cheeks; but his face was clouded, and his usually roguish eyes filled with tears now, speaking eloquently of what he had not the heart to put into words. I realised that he intended me to know that the bag and the penny it contained were his mother's parting gifts.

It was easy to get him settled in employment of a sort calculated to make a competent workman of him. He had good lodgings with his father at the house of a married couple who both took considerable interest in the boy, making up somewhat for his father's indifference. Things went well with Andrew for a little over a year. Then his father, who had come to this city from the place where the lad's mother had died, suddenly gave up his work, having decided to return whence he came, taking his son with him.

I was annoyed when Andrew told me this. Although the change was satisfactory to him, inasmuch as it would reunite him to his only brother Maurice, who lived and worked where they were going back, the lad realised that he was being taken from a situation which promised well for him. Seeking out the father, I laid before him the disadvantage Andrew would suffer by being deprived of his prospect of learning a useful trade. I was assured that it would be easy to place the lad in a similar position, and was forced to let things take their course.

Fifteen months passed, and one snowy night at Christmastide I was told that two boys were at the door desiring to see me. There stood Andrew and an older lad whom I found to be Maurice. It seemed that the father, failing to get work, had left Andrew with Maurice, and nothing had been heard of him for more than a year. Maurice secured employment for Andrew at his own place of work. The brothers managed nicely in comfortable lodgings till trade grew so slack that hands had to be reduced at the mill. Newcomers being first discharged, Andrew became unemployed. Seeking everywhere for work, he was maintained by Maurice for six weeks. Then Maurice also was discharged to join in the vain quest. Their kind-hearted landlady kept them for four weeks after their money was spent,

then reluctantly turned them from her door, seeing no prospect of their securing work for which thousands besides them were looking.

Ignorant of their father's whereabouts, they sought out his sister, who was unable either to assist them to find him or to relieve their distress. They had no other relations, and in their extremity Andrew remembered me. They had tramped forty miles in snow and slush without food, and had slept a night in a barn from which the owner had driven them with threats in the morning, frightening them from asking for the help they had purposed imploring at his farm. The one cottage at which they ventured to appeal after resuming their journey was tenanted by an old man who set his dog at them as idle beggars. They were ready to faint when they reached my door. After giving them a meal, I sent them to Andrew's former landlady. The good woman had lost her husband recently and could not undertake risk, so they went at my charges.

In a few days it was possible to look round on their behalf, a futile proceeding during holidays; and presently they were placed in work. Both prospered, Maurice as an engineer, and Andrew as a carriage-builder. The landlady had soon cause to be thankful for their presence in her house. She was taken ill. The neighbours did a good deal to help her, but the lodgers did more. Their mother having carefully instructed them, they were able to do anything in a house. Andrew kneaded and baked the family bread, cleaned fenders, fire-irons, and brass-work, while Maurice scrubbed floors and washed dishes; so that, when she recovered, the landlady found everything in apple-pie order. Nor did their kindness end there. Finding that she was permanently weakened by her illness, they insisted that she should hire help for which they

cheerfully paid. It was a heavy blow to the good woman when Andrew was accepted for service with the Colours, and she is quite unable to sympathise with Maurice in his disappointment that engineers must serve in the manufactories. To lose one, she says, is enough.

To lose one like Andrew is more than enough. Fortunately, however, he is by no means lost yet. The testimony of his commanding officer would seem to suggest that he has been found, inasmuch as he has greatly assisted to remedy a battalion scandal existing when he joined. There was then much waste and much spoilt food because of incompetent cooks. With no knowledge except that derived from early lessons given by his mother, but with initiative and good sense to make the most of this, he volunteered to do what he could to improve matters in the cooks' department. He succeeded beyond all expectation. I am told there is no more popular man in the battalion than Sergeant Andrew. His own story is that he enjoys the life, but wishes he had more opportunity for drill. He fears that he may be kept on as cook when he gets to France.

Even so, I suppose he will be rendering as useful service as any. The men must be fed. All cannot be in the firing line. Still, for Andrew's sake, we may hope that a happy combination of duties will be found possible. We may rest assured of this: he will do the right thing, be he where-soever or whatsoever. And whether he return safe and victorious, which God grant, or whether he fall gallantly defending his flag, he will still be wearing on his bosom a little flannel bag containing the parting gift of that mother who trained her son so well.

XL.

WHAT ALL MAY DO.

SOMETIMES the following dialogue takes place between a certain magistrate of great experience and a prisoner:—

“Have you any friends in Court?”

“No, sir.”

“Any anywhere?”

“No, sir.”

“What—none?”

“No, sir.”

“Oh, come; everybody knows somebody! Is there no one who will say a good word for you?”

“I don’t know anybody as will, sir.”

“How’s that?”

“I haven’t any friends, sir.”

“I’m afraid you’ve tired them all out,” is the magistrate’s conclusion; and sentence follows.

“Everybody knows somebody!” What a world of meaning is there! And how perfectly true it is! The trouble comes from the sort of friends many make after tiring out those who would do them good. And many never had a worthy person to stand by them at all.

Not that those who visit Police Courts as defendants or acquaintance of defendants are usually lacking in desire to help their friends out of trouble. It is remarkable how they will

scheme, and work, and sacrifice to find money for payment of fines. Where they lack is in ability rather than in will. Sometimes the sort of character borne by their friends makes prisoners loth to name them: sometimes the same fault on the friends' part accounts for prisoners being able to say with St Paul of those whose presence they would have at their trial if they could, "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me."

I do not mean that modern prisoners at all compare with St Paul, or their friends with the friends of the great Apostle, except that these latter showed much the same fear of the authorities as is apt to be shown by acquaintance of certain prisoners in our day. But St Paul's friends, of course, had infinitely better cause. And they were infinitely better men.

It was pathetic to hear a wretchedly-clad woman-prisoner once take part in a dialogue with the magistrate I have mentioned. Thrice over the question seeking to discover her friends had been kindly put. Thrice over she had stated that she knew no one who would help her.

At last the magistrate enquired in tones of surprise, "What—nobody?"

Then in weary, hopeless tones, impossible to reproduce in cold type, she answered—

"Only my husband."

"Poor creature! her husband was little worth. It was all very well for the kindly magistrate to say, "Oh, come now, he's somebody," and make the best of him by constituting him surety for his wife's future good behaviour. But the husband was correctly weighed up by his wife's doubt whether he were anybody at all.

Many friends of prisoners may be accurately

estimated at much the same value, whether they appear, or whether they think it wiser to refrain from appearing, to stand by those in trouble. And that fact has caused persons like myself to be appointed to take the place of such indifferent friends, so as, if it may be, to lend a hand to lift the fallen out of the mire.

No doubt a certain amount of good work is done by such as myself. It is not the indefinite extension of such service, however, that I would recommend. I had rather fence the edge of the precipice than erect a hospital at its foot. I do not call for experts to save beginners in crime from ruin. I am anxious to save people from taking the first wrong step.

In the chapter where I told of George's sacrifice, I said that a cure for our social ills lies ready to hand. It does. I have tried to hint at what the cure is. It consists simply in every one of us endeavouring to assist in promoting the welfare and happiness of our fellows, each by individual example and personal service. I desire to see a return to the old-fashioned religious conception of duty. In my judgment it is everybody's concern that men should live soberly, industriously, honourably, righteously. There is no nobler or more fascinating work that mortal can engage in than seeking by example and labour and precept to keep those among whom we live and move and have our being in the right way. Right, it has been well said, is the granite of the moral world—the foundation on which all other belief must rest. All wise people will choose right for its own sake. Wrong means failure, disappointment, suffering. It must be beaten and crushed for the ruin it brings both upon those who follow it and also upon their innocent victims. Right must triumph over wrong in the end, be appearances sometimes never so disheartening: "though the mills of God

grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small." Wise men see this, but unfortunately all are not wise. Wrong attracts the unwise. There are those who contemptuously allow such to go that way as though it were no concern of theirs. And not all guilty of this indifference are persons making no pretence of religion. Indeed it is very painful how theoretic religion can exist completely divorced from practical.

There is more in what our forefathers called "character" than many appear to think nowadays. Character is formed by habit. It is almost impossible for an habitually industrious person to become idle, an habitually truthful man to tell a lie, an habitually honest person to become dishonest, one habitually sober to become a drunkard. Contrariwise, it is much more difficult than many think for the habitually idle, lying, dishonest, and drunken to put into practice the strongest and best-meant resolutions. When a man has gone a certain distance on the wrong road he usually follows it to the end. Had their evil habits not been nipped in the bud, and had they not been trained early to do well, few of those whom these sketches deal with would have been found worthily serving Britain to-day. They were saved before they had gone too far. There is no more heart-breaking task than to attempt to reform a confirmed wrong-doer. I may have something to say of that another day.

In the right formation of his own character and the character of his fellows, I maintain that every Christian man has his bounden duty to do. This is not something that can be delegated by laity to clergy. It cannot be discharged by vicarious service rendered on payment of money. There are but two courses open. We may do our duty, or we may leave it undone. And upon our choice the ultimate fate of our country depends.

"Everybody knows somebody." Somebody is training everybody in habits which will form character for good or ill. Would that everybody had a true friend in somebody! The somebody need not be a preacher. Any downright honest man or woman will do.

When I was sixteen years old, and entirely innocent of knowledge of betting, I was thrown much into the society of an inveterate gambler. Curious to know the process by which he sometimes made money with remarkable rapidity, I made certain enquiries of him.

"Have you never done any betting?" he asked.

I admitted I had not.

"Then," he said, "take my advice; don't begin."

"But," I protested, much astonished, "you bet, don't you?"

"Yes," he agreed; "I do. I bet because I'm a fool. I should have been much better off if I'd never begun. Come with me, and I'll show you."

He took me to a book-maker's office and put five pounds on a race-horse. When we had left the door he went on—

"You saw those five sovereigns? Well, they're gone—I've spent them, or thrown them away—call it what you will. It's forty to one against my ever seeing them again; so we'll say they're gone."

"But," I argued, "you've got nothing for them. Why have you parted with them for nothing?"

"I've told you," he said; "because I'm a fool: that's the reason. I've got into the way of betting. I know it's a fool's game. Only the book-makers stand to make money by it. But I've got into the way, as I say, and I can't leave it off. You haven't begun. Well, take my advice: don't begin."

I watched anxiously while he read the evening newspaper about eight hours later.

"There," he said; "I told you the money was

gone. My horse ran sixth. There were forty starters. I had thirty-nine chances of losing my money against one of winning other people's. Only a fool would touch a game of that sort."

He was perfectly good-tempered over his loss. I have never ceased to admire the man for his candour, or to be grateful for the sensible advice he gave me. He was my somebody who, having a chance of leading me right or wrong, led me right. It is, humanly speaking, due to him that I have never made a bet in my life.

I shall not soon forget the example of a man whose business it was to take account of the stock in a great steel-works. It had not been convenient to an under-manager, now dead, to go through a certain portion of his departmental stock, and knowing that little had changed since the last stock-taking, he desired to have the previous year's figures copied as the ascertained value of the stock that year. In the audience of all who stood by, the accountant replied, courteously, but most firmly—

"What you ask me to do is not right; and you know it is not right. We will go over that stock to-morrow. Please have it ready by then."

Those brief words had a wonderful effect. They did nothing but good to the man addressed, and of those who stood by more than one determined to take pattern by the speaker's example of honest and straightforward dealing, and did so.

A young workman much given to swearing was astonished when, as he concluded a string of oaths, an aged foreman once quietly said to him—

"I think you can't read the old Book much. It says, 'As he covered himself with cursing like as with a garment, so let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones.' You'll go on till you get into such a way of cursing, if you don't

mind, that you'll never know when you're swearing and when you aren't."

It may seem unlikely that such simple words would make any impression. But they did. That man ceased swearing altogether.

In another case I knew well, a lad, eager to get a better situation, gave his age as two years above what it really was. Knowing of the boy's desire to get on, and being wishful to help him, the master he then served had a letter from the prospective employer enquiring about his character for honesty, industry, and ability, but it was incidentally stated that he said he was nineteen years old.

The master sent for the lad and read the letter of enquiry to him. Then he said—

"You'd better withdraw your notice; stay with me another year; do your best, and then, when you are eighteen, seek a better place, but give your real age. You cannot have the situation you seek except by telling a lie. It would do you no good to get it through lying: for, you know, God cannot bless such work as that."

The master's words went straight to that lad's heart. He took the kindly-offered advice, and was tremendously helped thereby. He now occupies an honourable position in a certain city, and is greatly respected for his strict honour and integrity.

Having made merry with wine, a group of young men were plotting to disturb an outdoor religious meeting being held by a sect of which they did not chance to approve. Their plans were overheard by a man of character, not given to parading his religion. He said, very quietly and pleasantly—

"Nay, you'll do nothing of the sort. I know you better than that. We ought all of us to be giving a hand at suchlike work. If we're too cowardly or too selfish to do it, we're none of us going to interfere with them that will."

I was told years afterwards by one of those to whom that reproof was given as a young man how ashamed the whole party felt; and I was much struck with my informant's obvious reverence of the man who kept those thoughtless youths from acting foolishly.

But there is no end to the illustrations which press themselves upon me, seeking to help to illuminate my meaning when I would urge that all of us assist, consciously or unconsciously, in the formation of the character of others for good or ill. I appeal to all, be their outward observance of religion whatsoever, to realise the force of their example and precept. Those who do but remove offences out of the way render no mean service. I had rather all were consciously building the edifice of the character of those around them, and taking a pride in building well. Yet those who are no builders need not be quite idle for that. The frank owning of our faults and mistakes for the warning of others has a value only smaller than the value of our exhibiting a godly, righteous, and sober life.

I am pleading for a return to what our forefathers called "the fear of God" in our lives: to that state of mind and feeling which made it every honest man's duty to correct evil tendencies where-soever he observed them. To sternly denounce waste, dishonesty, fraud, idleness, lying, slovenliness, drunkenness, and all vices, and to praise and actively encourage every virtue in those about us, be they whosoever, is a duty, dictated by that old-fashioned fear of God, which Britain would be all the better for having once more conscientiously discharged by her children. We can only do our part worthily in this according as our own lives are right.

It is consequently to every right-thinking person that I address my plea. Infinitely more can be

done by master personally dealing with man, mistress with maid, neighbour with neighbour, friend with friend, workman with his fellow, than by any subscription, however large, to set some agent to work vicariously.

After all, the nation is sound at the core. The number of those who live carelessly, godlessly, evilly, is terribly great. But the number of those who do well is greater. It is possible, by every third man and woman doing well adopting somebody doing ill, to find a helpful friend for all who need putting in the right way.

We have let things drift along these generations till in great towns the task of setting straight many matters now seriously awry is not easy. There is that awful multitude living in fornication and adultery. There is that great host of idle, thriftless, drunken persons congregated in large districts of every big city. There are the thousands and tens of thousands of ragged, neglected children whose condition in every great centre of population is a reproach to the nation that endures it.

What takes place day by day may be strikingly illustrated by the following :—

Fifteen years ago I entered a court, seeking the drunken mother of a boy I was sending away from home. In a clean little house in that court I found a bright, bonny young woman twenty years old, ten days a wife, brought from a country village to her new home by her husband, a railway drayman in this city.

Twelve months after that visit to the day, the young wife stood in the dock, her two months' old baby in her arms, charged with drunkenness for the fifth time. Unable any longer to pay fines, everything he possessed being sold or in pawn, the husband was compelled to see his wife go to prison in the hope that fourteen days' enforced abstinence would cure the craving neighbours had

given her for intoxicants. Being at the breast, the baby went with its mother. It was a terrible spectacle. Of course our lady missionaries had set to work in womanly fashion to try and reclaim her at her first appearance in the dock. But the mischief had been wrought while she was left solely in the society of those who led her wrong. No sympathetic Christian woman was found to take an interest in her when she came a simple stranger to the sins and sorrows of a great city. Attempts at rescue were too late. She went from bad to worse, and at the last came to utter ruin, dying in the lock ward of a hospital, and leaving four diseased and wasted children to be brought up by a father wellnigh crazed with grief and care.

It may be asked, what are the clergy doing? The clergy are doing something, but not nearly enough. And it is hopeless to expect much more of them until the laity, whether professed churchgoers or not, wake up to their responsibilities and duties. The laity will then insist that foolish wrangles among rival sects shall stop, and better use be found for energy than waste in idle quarrels. They will see that ministers of all denominations unite in promoting the true wellbeing of the people, or they will cease to have any use for ministers at all. When the home Kikuyu Conference comes to be held, if the Churches be given wisdom to hold such, it will be a happy and blessed day for Britain. But I have no great hope of seeing that day except the laity awake and insist. With the deepest and most grateful appreciation of many ministers of great sympathy and breadth of mind, it is still to the laity that I specially appeal. With them, in God's providence, all power ultimately rests.

The magnificent work the laity have done for our armies through the Y.M.C.A. illustrates well

what they could do for our whole people by insisting upon union and co-operation between rival sects. As our quarrels are hushed in anxiety to comfort and cheer those engaged in fighting our common foe, so we may well resolve they shall be hushed in determination to make of Britain a better, happier land for those who return deserving higher reward than we can ever pay. I desire to ask of all members of the laity, like myself ineligible for service with the Colours, What are you doing in this matter?

Many women I know, training girls usefully in Sunday-school, Girls' Friendly Society, Young Women's Christian Association, Girls' Club, or kindred movement, are doing all they can—as many men, whose work among lads I have noticed already as so fruitful of good, are doing all they can. But the number of young people untouched by any elevating influence remains appalling. There is room for any number of volunteers to enormously extend all sorts of efforts to set forth practical Christianity.

Above all, there is urgent need for friendly and sympathetic visitors to the homes of the people. Somebody for everybody: one family, one visitor, who shall be a real friend. That is my ideal: a man or woman not easily daunted; who will understand that where parents are hopeless, children may well be influenced for good. Such a one will mostly find much to encourage. The evil habits of years can seldom be eradicated in a day. But few people in a thousand are incapable of learning to value one who proves a desire to become not a superior, interfering busybody, but an honest, intelligent friend who seeks to understand and make allowance for peculiar difficulties never personally experienced. That I submit, very humbly, is proved by the numbers who gratefully remember my own small services and the greater

help given by many employers and others to whom I have been the means of providing an introduction.

It will be objected that all are not equally fitted to undertake the work of visiting. But I do suggest visiting from door to door. All worthy folk are capable of making friends. I suggest that all should make a friend of one of the great number who sorely need a friend. It may be the man or lad in the workshop, the butcher or baker's errand-boy, the girl in a drapery establishment, or in the scullery of one's own home. I have known wonderful work done for a circle of such humble friends by a bed-ridden old lady who received them one by one in her room when she could do no more to continue the remarkable labours of a remarkable life. And perhaps the very finest and most enduring home missionary work I ever knew is still being done in workshop and Sunday-school by a man who has done it these forty years, following up his teaching by visits to his friends' own homes. There is none too feeble, too busy, too humble, too poor to set forth the example and the influence of goodness among his fellows if the will to do it be there.

When the great war broke out, every one of us who wished to be able to look our fellows honestly in the face set out to find what he could do for Britain. The way in which women have toiled at organising, or nursing, or knitting—doing anything and everything to help; as days went on offering themselves for work commonly regarded as the work of men—all for the good of Britain, and for gratitude to their kith and kin fighting Britain's battles by land and sea,—that is the copy set for our example who would worthily acknowledge the priceless sacrifice of many who will see their country no more. What a monument to perpetuate the story of their heroism:—Because these

gave their lives none now remain friendless in Britain but such as spurned the hand stretched out to help!

Presently our heroes who shall see the end of the fight will be returning victorious. Think of the homes to which some are coming back! It is time to be up and doing, that they may realise that we for whom they risked everything were for our part not unwilling to render them great service. Let us see to it that the home of every sailor and soldier is not lacking in decency and comfort for anything we can do.

We pour out our money like water to educate the young. No praise can be too high for the teachers of our elementary schools. They do their work faithfully and well. They show in a hundred ways a lively and affectionate interest in the children under their care. Whether the subjects they are compelled to teach are always such as would best fit the children for their future career, I do not propose to discuss. I merely wish to enquire, to what purpose is all this expenditure of money and care if a third of our children are to lose all intelligent and helpful friends when they turn their backs on the school door? What like must their future be?

I am hoping to see the day of compulsory military training for our boys, and compulsory domestic training for our girls, with all the good that will come of that. I dream of a day when our mercantile marine will no longer be manned largely by foreigners but by British lads systematically removed from the moral perils of our streets, to their own and their country's great gain. Wise legislation may do much towards reducing the evils of idleness, intemperance, and gambling: it may even give a chance of becoming useful and prosperous citizens of our colonies to thousands condemned by competition to abject

poverty here. There may be developments of recent Acts of Parliament directed towards ameliorating the lot and aiding in the uplifting of those in trouble, sorrow, need, sickness, or any other adversity. The Government can never do too much for those, especially, who come back broken in health from serving in the war.

But the work of no corporation, how excellent soever, can cause that day to dawn when it will cease to be incumbent on every Christian patriot to seek the moral betterment of his fellows by his own individual effort. When all is said and done it is that which tells. The road is sometimes hard and painful. It is no use denying it. Countless disappointments beset the path. And the sorest difficulties are mostly raised by the very persons one would help.

But for all this, if I know anything, the encouragements are greater. When I have myself been most sorely tried, the bitterest disappointment has melted all away in the contemplation of the wonderful goodness of those who have stood by me in what I have sought to do. The sweetness of the friendships one makes in seeking to do service to others passes understanding. It has been more than comforting to find that this master whose confidence was abused by one I took to him, still believes in me; that that princely giver whose money has been wasted by me, though the effort I made to help some person thereby was honest and seemed to promise well, is still good enough to say, "Never mind, you did your best; you cannot always hope to succeed," and ever ready to continue to make me his almoner, little as I deserve the trust. But I dare not let myself go on the debt I owe to friends surely the best ever found by mortal man. Neither can I describe the surpassing joy of looking over the records of lives one has been in some small degree

permitted to influence and help. And there is no saying what is impossible for the weakest of us to do, if only we be faithful, and earnestly seek to overcome; if only we be resolute to do our duty.

In this city, a woman leading a life of shame, the most hopeless creature you can picture, was induced by a humble Christian lady who knew her well to attend a simple mission service. When it was over, tears were streaming down the wanderer's cheeks. With infinite tenderness, the friend who sought to help her gave her the best of counsel, leading her to the Redeemer's feet that same night. Then for months, hours every day, she sat with her in her home, helped her to make things sweet and clean there, put her into the way of earning an honest and sufficient livelihood, saw her "stablished, strengthened, settled."

When she had gone to her reward, her husband presided at a meeting at which a prison chaplain spoke on the evil of drink. He was a pessimistic speaker, and declared he had never in the course of a long experience known any woman confirmed in drinking habits turn from the error of her ways.

At the conclusion of the meeting, and after the speaker had left, a woman approached the chairman, weeping.

"I'm sorry that gentleman said what he did," she sobbed: "I'd got several to come here, thinking he'd encourage them a bit. And now they'll think it's no use trying."

She was the woman the chairman's wife had helped. Ten years had passed. She still stood firm. Every spare moment she could find was spent in holding out a hand to help others out of the slough whence she had herself been drawn, and to plant their feet on the Rock beside her own.

The chairman put his hand on her shoulder.

She was much to him, being in his judgment 'a precious jewel won by his own dear wife to grace the diadem of the King in His beauty.

"Never mind, Sarah," he said; "you just go on. I'm sorry the gentleman said that. But then, he doesn't know what we know. You know one, Sarah; and I know one, whose own experience makes us just overflowing with gratitude, and joy, and hope."

Since then, he has rejoined his wife. But Sarah remains here, steadfast, faithful, and hard at work.

An old-fashioned doctor, not making much show of religion, was called in to attend a notorious infidel whom he knew well. The man had often boasted openly that no parson should ever enter his door.

He was now very ill. Instead of arguing with him over his folly in denying the truths of religion, the doctor, standing gravely beside his bed, declared in sober, manly fashion—

"Brown, it's my duty to tell you it's time you prepared to meet your Maker. You may get better; but you are in a very dangerous state."

Then he knelt down and uttered a simple, earnest petition for mercy on the man's behalf, afterwards slowly reciting the Lord's Prayer, waiting a moment for the patient to join in, which he did with a choking voice that told of a contrite heart.

In the morning men learnt that a miracle had been wrought hereabouts. Brown had "sent for the parson." Recovering from his illness, he began to lead a new life, which he continues to this day.

There is just such encouragement waiting for all who will quit themselves like men in the service of God and the people whom He has made.

XII.

ON HIGHER SERVICE.

WHEN one feels the slightest responsibility for the course taken by others, and when those others to the number of one hundred and sixty-six have laid down their lives in the great fight for good, it is not always easy to continue going about among the friends they have left behind. There are many different habits of mind and feeling to be encountered. It must not be thought that parents of the most careless sort are invariably, or even frequently, found utterly indifferent when the blow falls which takes their children away. And I do not know that it is less difficult to deal with a mother whose grief is exhibited in blank and stony despair than with one who rends the air with wailings of real and poignant sorrow.

I could say much about the uselessness of exhibitions of remorse that comes too late. But this is neither the time nor place. It is fitting now only to remember that we all suffer alike, whether we all live alike, act alike, believe alike, or not. And it is but right to own that a particularly erring father provided me with that reminder of an eternal spring of consolation which I have found more useful, perhaps, than anything else in seeking to leave a little comfort here and there.

Certainly he had not done much for his boy

until he heard of him lying in hospital, grievously wounded, but still able to smoke. Then, while his son remained on earth, he spent every penny he could spare in purchasing cigarettes for the lad. It was much for him to do. He had ruined his own constitution by living a vicious life, and was working at such odd jobs as enfeebled health permitted. He had seldom more than a couple of shillings a week to spare after paying the bare cost of simple food and the cheapest lodgings. He went without the smallest luxury for three months, and took keen delight in bestowing upon his son all he could scheme by such self-denial.

I saw him when all on earth for Will was ended, and cast about in my mind for some word of cheer. It was left for the father to supply it.

"We haven't a deal to live for here, mester," he said. "When I read them casualty lists, and when I hear folk say, 'Poor things!' I say, Happy things! It isn't only in war that folk suffer from wrong and cruelty. There's a deal amiss with every one of us; and it comes out in other places besides the battlefield. And this world'll never be mended up to look ought but a poor, patched place. There'll always be scars and sores left all up and down. We've made too big a mess of things to get 'em set right, as they once were.

"It's in another place as we shall find what we're longing for. Aye, but we *shall* find it there! I've heard preachers as seemed to doubt the good news they've got to tell. But what does the old Book say? I wor thinking of it as I packed off Will's last box of cigs, which he never needed. It's this—

"'If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him.'

"That's why I call all them what's gone out of this great fight, happy things, not poor things. Do

you think, mester, as there's ever a one of 'em as didn't ask Him for the best He has to give? I reckon they'd all ask, right enough. It would come quite natural to 'em. When a child's in danger, or frightened, he calls out to his father or mother, hardly knowing what he's doing. And we're none of us any better than children, or any stronger, where He comes. They'd ask, right enough.

"We should all know what to think of a father or mother as took no notice of a child calling to 'em for help. Everybody worth counting does what he can then. And I know nobody as wouldn't go a long way out of his road to comfort his own lad a bit when he's happened a accident. Do you think I wasn't right pleased to send our Will them bits of things?

"Same by Him; He's just as pleased to help everybody as even looks His way. Of course there's a deal of difference between Him and us. I know that. We shall never learn till we come to die how wonderful good He is. There's a deal in that 'much more' to my way of thinking.

"As I've said afore, there isn't much to live for here, specially if we won't go His way. Some of us have found that out. It's surprising to me as anybody should think this is any sort of a place to want to stop in for ever. I've always noticed as it's them as does best here as goes first. And I look at things nowadays in this way: Where will you find men as have done better than our sailors and soldiers? It's no wonder if many of the best of them are gone.

"I haven't a bit of a doubt but what they've looked His way, longing for good things where they were going to, and as they'll have seen Him running from the door to meet 'em, as it tells us somewhere else in the good old Book.

"If it was my job, mester, same as yours is, to

go about among people as have lost their lads, I should talk to 'em all like that. And if anybody said to me, like one did the night afore last, 'I wish I wor sure he's all right, and as I should find him when I get to heaven,' I should tell whoever it was just what I told her. I said, Missus, if such as you and me don't alter, we mayn't never see them again as has been took from us. Our place where they are will be empty. Don't you make no mistake, missus; they're all right. There's nought like being in danger and knowing it for bringing men to their senses. It's such as us, as lives careless-like, and has nought to stir us up, as dies careless, never giving a look to our Father as is waiting for us to come His way. That's how we're likely to miss getting where they're gone. We've got to be thankful they're safe, and waken up ourselves for fear we miss the road as'll take us where they are."

I have adopted the theology of Will's father in many a case since the day I heard his views. And because some have been helped thereby I now reproduce the words he spoke as well as memory serves. It may be that others will find his homely teaching of service.

On quite a different plane from his has been the life of that widow I visited in the daily round of yesterday. I have known her fifteen years, always a most upright God-fearing woman. She had an only son, thirty years old when the war came. In his youth he had given her much anxiety. He was wild and mischievous. It was at her own request that I persuaded him to become a soldier. She rightly felt that discipline would do him good. He became quite a different fellow, finishing a splendid record by giving his life for England. That mother took up a well-worn Bible, opened it at the thirty-fifth chapter of Isaiah, and with a trembling finger directed my eyes to the last

verse: "And the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." Then quietly, calmly, but with a fervour of faith as difficult to picture as it was beautiful to witness, she said, "I'm resting on *that*. I had hoped and prayed to see him again here, safe and well, but his Father needed him. And to think of the meeting there!" Here again I had called seeking to give consolation, to find help myself.

But, as is fitting, the aged, kindly English gentleman, who has long been my most helpful guide, philosopher, and friend, provides me with the cheer I value most myself, going in and out among the homes of the bereaved. He has done and suffered much for his country. The blow was cruel which took from him his favourite son, given while serving Britain in France. Yet only a little while afterwards he could say to me, a sad smile lighting up his earnest, beautiful face—

"I have what some would call a quaint fancy about this war. To me it has its most glorious side. I certainly think that God is touching many men 'of unclean lips who dwell among a people of unclean lips'—that is, ordinary folk like you and me—just now, with the 'live coal from off the altar': and *that* will make them fit for a place they never could be fit for otherwise. Yes, I think that many are passing out of this baptism of fire into the armies of heaven—many whom we should possibly think unlikely: unknown to us as His: but known to Him who knew the seven thousand men of whose very existence Elijah was unaware. And seeing how many young men go, like my lad, in their prime, at their best and brightest, their work here broken off, as it were, at the middle, I think the Master must call these with a special

partiality, as of about His own age when He left this earth. And I think of them as enrolled in shining bands in the new and conquering chivalry of heaven—some of them, the defeated of earth, with no trophies to carry, but only a blank shield devoid of achievement, but the more attached to their great Master and chief, in that He called them when they had no claim to such distinction. And there they are, brothers in arms, brothers in in a new service; and I seem to hear the cry ringing out once more, ‘Whom shall we send, and who will go for us?’ and I fancy I see the whole eager company springing forward to reply with one heart and one voice, ‘Here am I; send me;’ and thus they go forth at His will conquering and to conquer.”

THE END.

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